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JESUS AS HE WAS

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Time Has Come	1
II.	Thinking It Out	4
III.	An Interlude	14
IV.	The World	22
V.	The Machine	37
VI.	The Sexes	51
VII.	The Churches	66
VIII.	The Sciences	81
IX.	The Sinners	97
X.	The Arts	111
XI.	The Saints	127
XII.	The Heavenlies	143
	Epilogue	157

JESUS AS HE WAS

CHAPTER I

THE TIME HAS COME

" THE Kingdom of God is at hand ! " This is really a tremendous saying. Imagine a man standing up to-day and announcing in the same absolute way " the end of war is at hand ! " A man might indeed say " the abolition of war would be humanity's finest achievement. It would be worth a lifetime of labour to bring this idyllic consummation even a little bit nearer. But no one by himself can do much. It will need the co-operation of all men of good-will. The ultimate issue of such effort is doubtful. And if indeed there is final success it will take a very long time to achieve it."

But John the Baptiser had no hesitation in saying " This Kingdom that your best thinkers have dreamed about for ages as a remote possibility—this ideal state—is just going to be set up. And there is amongst you the Man who is going to do it."

No wonder crowds came to listen to John. Here was something exciting to hear, something

stimulating, shattering! The people had been taught to think that one day God would send a powerful person, a sort of ideal man, who would put everything to rights for them—one might say a *deus ex machina*. Perhaps John was this expected person himself? But no; he would not let them think that. He told them they must look for a greater personality. This may be considered a strange thing for a popular preacher to say! John was a man of great force and vitality—a live wire. He was a power with the people. He could not fail to know it. He could sway them to his will. He could move them to do what he wished. He seemed a born leader. And yet without the slightest hesitation he forbade the people to pin their faith to himself and pointed them to another. Indeed, in comparing himself to this other he used language which might seem to err on the side of extravagance. For he said that he (John) was not worthy to black his boots—or words to that effect.

And he was not referring to a merely hypothetical figure—a creature of his own imagining. He had a definite man in mind. It was, to be sure, a relation of his. Are our relations the people we are accustomed to idealise? Not often, we may think. This kinsman must have made a most extraordinary impression on John's mind. And yet, so far as we know, this man had as yet done nothing at all remarkable in his life. He had created no impression, made no

great stir. Up to that time he was practically unknown. This might not have been surprising if he were a mere youth—a lad of brilliant promise. But he had already lived out the best part of half a lifetime. He was old enough to have married and been the father of a young family. What was it in and concerning him that had so impressed the fiery fancy of John that the latter had no hesitation in proclaiming him to be " the Man " so long expected—able to fulfil the most exalted and exacting expectations ?

The purpose of these pages is to present some sort of an answer to this question.

CHAPTER II

THINKING IT OUT

It is a crisis—albeit a crisis of whose issue there can be no doubt.

You picture the lonely man out in that desert spot. He has come right away from his fellow men. There are times when other people simply cannot help us a bit. The only Person we cannot get away from is just the only One we can bear to be with—God. Jesus has no thought for any bodily need. In a supreme struggle of the spirit all that kind of thing is just as nothing. The issues must be faced—the decisions taken, finally and irrevocably.

It had been clear to him these many years that the one and only thing supremely worth doing in life was the thing that *God* wanted him to do. If the will of God could be discovered then life had no peradventure whatsoever. From his early childhood he had been taught that the will of God could be found in the Word of God. And so he had become a student of the Book. But he was no conventional student, content merely to amass a knowledge of facts and texts. His mind was alert to spiritual values. Some parts of the Book came

more intimately home to him than others. And this means they had a more directive value for his own personal life. A way of God was there, and a will of God. What was that will for him? Had he something to do for God which none other could do?

His people were a people of a great hope. Again and again had their hopes been frustrated. But they did most firmly believe that in the end their God would be true to them. There was wide expectation at this time that God was going to do something quite soon. He would not hold himself back much longer. He would come and deliver. And moreover he would do this through the agency of a great person—one whom they had been taught to speak of as "the Anointed One."

Jesus felt within himself an immense longing that the national hopes should be fulfilled. This had been growing upon him with an ever more resistless force as the years passed. But how? This question really involved two problems. The one—what was to be the nature of this "fulfilment"? The other—who was to do the fulfilling? Not indeed that these two problems could for long be considered separately. If "the anointed one" were of such and such a sort he would do his task in such and such a way. The character of the work would depend on the character of the man. There was no ready-made programme for him. Indeed, people's opinions as to what he would be and

what he would do differed widely. Some expected a political and martial personage a descendant of the old royal house, who would once again set up a powerful Israelite kingdom and rule autonomous from Jerusalem. Others dreamed of a superhuman being, a Son of Man, sent by God, who would come from the heavens, bring an end to the present dispensation and usher in the "Age to come."

We may imagine that Jesus often discussed these hopes with other people. But can we not also imagine that as time went on the ideas of his friends and neighbours seemed to him ever less adequate? As he pondered and prayed, his own conception of what this ideal man should be and do became more and more profound and—unconventional. This conception involved a new reading of, it brought a new significance to, many parts of the sacred books. It involved using ideas (though with caution and reserve) from certain popular works which had been put out at intervals during the past 200 years. But it involved also the introduction of many thoughts and judgments, subversive of popular ideals, which came richly to the mind of Jesus, and which he knew were original to himself.

It is, of course, an impertinence to attempt to explain the mind of genius; and Jesus was a genius, whatever else he may have been. Genius is just that one thing inexplicable which distinguishes the few from the many. But if we

cannot reach the highest peaks, we can at any rate explore the base and have a broad and general impression of the contours and configuration of that which is unscaleable.

As then, we may suppose, the picture of the anointed one became clearer to the mind of Jesus, and as it became more and more *his own* conception, a thing of his own creating, so must the conviction have been born, have grown ever more dominant within him, that *he* was the one to fulfil it.

To every man indeed there should come this sort of feeling—the feeling of his uniqueness There is a niche for him which no one else can exactly fill. Who is the ne'er-do-well? Is he not the man who has lost or never found his niche? The supreme art in life is to know the place you can fill, and thereupon endeavour to occupy it worthily.

It took Jesus a long time to make up his mind. He was content to stay at his carpenter's job in the village until the way was quite clear. And thus he came to be about thirty years old.

One of the deciding factors in his life was his kinsman John. It is incredible that John could have come to the tremendous and momentous conclusion that Jesus was the hope of the nation except upon the basis of intimate knowledge. We may picture to ourselves the intercourse between these two. It may be that in the earlier days John seemed the more masterful personality.

He had taken his own life in hand very soon. He felt the call of the desert. He loved to spend long times in those wildernesses where God is not crowded out. He felt himself a man apart—that God wanted him for some great purpose. Maybe the question came home to him sometimes—was he the anointed one? He had personality and power. But Jesus? There was something indefinably great in that kinsman of his. He shared the ardour of John. But there was a length and a breadth and a depth and a height in him that more and more impressed itself upon the latter, so that at last he felt that he himself could be little more than a voice heralding a greater one.

How he must have argued this with Jesus! But Jesus was not to be hurried. If this thing were to be done it should only be done by one who had by long thought and penetrating prayer probed to the very mind of God.

Jesus recalls all this—remembers the lengthy way he has travelled until he has come now to this final moment of fateful decision.

And then—the recent events?

There was the memorable day not long ago when he had said "Good-bye" to his mother and left his home. John had already started the stirring work, whose report was ringing through the land. The people came to him in crowds. Some thought he must be the Expected One. But no—John said there was a mightier man coming. He would not say

more, he would not reveal the name. He would wait the will of Jesus.

And then one day Jesus appeared, an inconspicuous figure in the crowd. The hour had come and, with it, the man. John's longings and hopes were not to be disappointed. Jesus held back until the rest of the people had gone away : and then he asked John to baptise him. John (says one account) was reluctant to do this, for surely Jesus did not need it. But at last he was persuaded to do so. Jesus felt (as he said on a later occasion) that John's baptism was " of God," and therefore it was right he should submit to it.

Jesus remembered now how extraordinary had been the result for him. As he knelt beside the river it had come to him with irresistible force that God was giving Divine sanction to the step he was taking. He had felt the power of God coming on him. He had felt that God was actually speaking to him. It was as if his relationship to God was now become as peculiarly intimate as that between a father and a son. If there remained a last glimmer of hesitation—it was gone. His Father was sending him forth. And yet not quite immediately. Jesus was conscious of a longing for being quite alone. Now that the thing was to be done, and God—his Father—was to be with him in the doing of it, he felt the need of one more final review—a definite settling of the lines upon which he should work.

There are three thoughts upon which especially his mind lingers here in the wilderness.

And first this. The future would be very precarious so far as worldly matters were concerned. For years now he had been working for a living, and had earned a wage sufficient for his needs and for the provision of a comfortable home. But all this had now to be given up. In the time coming he would not know where he was going to lay his head for a night's rest, and he would have to depend on charity for food. Such an outlook could not attract. And yet the task before him was one of such infinite importance that these material concerns by comparison sink into insignificance. Moreover, his Father knows he has need of such things, and after all a word of the old Scripture is profoundly true: "man does not live by bread alone." And so, even if hardship and suffering lie ahead of him he will refuse entirely and for all the time to be anxious about those things of which the common opinion is that they are the matters of primary concern. He will have no forebodings, but in answer to "the one clear call" will in future listen only to the Divine voice—the every word which proceeds from the mouth of God.

But again. There was public opinion, and he had come to know that he must set himself against this *vox populi*. The land was seething with discontent. His people were calling for a leader. If he were to draw the sword against

the foreign ruler, would he not soon have an enthusiastic multitude following him? So much in the old writings had seemed to show that the "Anointed One" was to be a king amongst men. It was so plausible to argue that he should sit upon the throne of David, and bring all other nations to be subject unto him. Was not that an inspiriting ambition? Would not that bring peace and righteousness everywhere? Jesus was so conscious that his was a will of love to all men. If this will could dominate the world, would not that be the greatest blessing the world could have? But yet—did not history itself show the futility of this ambition? Two hundred years ago there had been a national uprising. It started with the noblest aims, and could show its honourable list of martyrs for the great cause. And yet, how had the Maccabean dominance degenerated and become a thing of the earth—earthy! It was a devil's deceit to think that a rule of God could be accomplished by material force.* Might could not guarantee right. That allegiance only could last which was of the heart. He must draw men by the cords of love, not crush them by the dominance of force!

But again, was not this rather to leave God out? After all it was primarily and essentially a work of God's that he was setting out to do. It was going to be extraordinarily difficult. To accomplish so great a thing single-handed

* Cp. pp. 33ff.

—for upon whom could he depend?—seemed an almost preposterous ambition. Would not God help him? A thousand times—yes! But how? Good men had depended upon God before now, and who would deny they had been helped by Him? Nevertheless, was not the record of human achievement very largely a record of failure? The finer your aim the more certain your disappointment. Had not Jeremiah been a crushed and broken man? And what of that man of mystery spoken of by Isaiah? Was he not a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Did he not pour out his soul unto death? And yet, to what purpose, with what result? He was willing to bear so much: he gave himself utterly to the work of God. Yet he was so little heeded that not even his name survived. He was just despised and rejected of men.

But now? Might not God be expected to work for the Desired One, the Elect, the Anointed in ways of conspicuous power? Was it not incredible that when at long last the One for whom men for so many generations had looked —the Saviour—whether conceived on the natural or supernatural plane—was it not incredible to suppose that such an one would not be supported by the whole force of Divine omnipotence? Would not the angels themselves be commanded to protect him with every safeguard? Nothing shows more vividly the complete independence and originality of

Jesus than the fact that he resisted this conclusion, and indeed regarded it as mere temptation. It is surely because no other ever had such complete trust in God.* His Father would always do that which was completely wise and entirely loving. To rely on Him was to leave Him to do just as He willed. It would be distrustful to expect Him—to ask Him even—to do anything abnormal. It would be presumption in any sort of way to seem to force His hand. Once and for all, Jesus will never, by deed, word or thought, put his Father to any such test.

* * * * *

So then Jesus, from his long, lonely meditation, his spiritual struggle, there in the waste places, came forth to his great enterprise, determined that he would give no heed to the results which might come upon himself, his comfort, his safety, his life ; determined to be utterly independent of public opinion, to draw men by moral suasion though it might disappoint them bitterly in their political ambitions ; determined to rely upon no miraculous aid from God, convinced that to do the will of his Father meant to accept all that came, uncomplaining and without question.

* Cp. p. 41.

CHAPTER III

AN INTERLUDE

And so one could go on, endeavouring to portray the inner mind of Jesus—to reconstruct him, so to speak, as he was for himself. But such an effort, if taken too seriously and pursued with persistent solemnity, would be bound to fail. At best one could only be plausible. The result would convince few.

And yet it is unquestionably the fact that in each generation we have so to present him that he *lives*. But that can only be done if we remember and ever keep before us these two things. On the one hand, that he was a man of his time and place, with all the limitations thus implied. And on the other, that he must be, as it were, lifted out of that *milieu* and put down amongst ourselves, here and now. The possibility of this depends on one thing, viz., the fact that human nature remains the same through every vicissitude of circumstance, be it temporal or material. Every man has to live at some time and in some place or other. To some degree a man is the child of his age and environment. We have, therefore, to know something of this, in order to understand him.

But the bigger the man the less will these circumstances tend to explain him. There is an element of the universal in every particular. And so far as anyone has triumphed in the art of living, so far is it impossible to describe him merely in the terms of his time and place.

Think for a moment of a well-known fictitious character. Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark, and much that he said and did is dependent upon that fact. Indeed, if he were not the Prince of Denmark Shakespeare's play would have to be largely reconstructed. And yet we feel quite assured that Shakespeare could have dressed him differently, put him into quite other circumstances, and yet still have given us the Hamlet we know. For there is a certain character or personality whom we call by this name, and he will live and be essentially that wherever he is placed. A Hamlet of Hampstead will be Hamlet still.

And so I do not hesitate to say about Jesus that it is necessary again and again to read the Gospel story in order to picture him as vividly as possible living the life of a Galilæan artisan, turned preacher, of 2,000 years ago. But it is also as necessary (I urge) to shut the book, take the man you have visualised, the kind of personality he has seemed to you, and boldly to bring him into the twentieth century, amidst all the surroundings that are familiar to us.

This should not be impossible ; but it will

sometimes require a real effort of the imagination. If he were here now he would not be able, nor would it be necessary for him, to live precisely the same kind of life as he lived then. I do not know how the law would deal with a group of itinerant preachers whose means of support were precarious. But perhaps the question does not arise, for one may well doubt whether he would be content with those methods of propagating his message which alone were possible to him in the days of long ago.

I imagine that he would gladly utilise some of the wonderful facilities for intercourse which are now open to us. He would wish his words to be carried far and wide. Would he refuse the pulpit of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields on a broadcasting night? He would wish to impress his gospel by personal appeal (as of old) in as many places as possible. Would he not make use of railways and motor cars? He would wish to see life under as many aspects as possible. Would he not visit factories and workshops and mines?

He used to be found at table in many kinds of houses. If he were now to share humble meals with the poor, would he ever dine out in the West End? He healed the sick and suffering, would not his gracious presence often brighten the wards in our hospitals? He had a love for fishermen; would he not try and meet them at such places as Grimsby? He adored children; would he not like to see our

well-equipped schools, and the children at their work ?

He who was the friend of sinners would assuredly still astonish conventional people by consorting with, and endeavouring to help, those who are not at all respectable. He was able to carry crowds with him because they were conscious of his real sympathy with them in their interests and longings. How would he show his sympathy with those masses of quite nice people to-day whose interests, apart from their work and their homes, seem concentrated upon politics, football matches and the cinema ?

It is easy to write in this strain. The point is that unless we can thus utilise Jesus he does not live, and if he is not alive he is little more than a name to us. It is important then that first we should try to appreciate, with whatsoever historic sense we have, his, so to call it, reaction to his original environment. It is important that next we should endeavour to drop that environment out of sight, and bring him, all that he positively, permanently, essentially is, into vital contact with the immediate present and all its problems.

It follows then that we may quite openly confess that the particular question that pressed upon him—whether he was the Messiah, and how, if he were such, he should fulfil the national hopes—that this actual question has little meaning or reality for us. Is there one person in a thousand to-day who cares two straws about the Jewish Messiah ? Do any of

us mind in the least whether or not he "fulfilled" ancient and ambiguous Hebrew prophecies? Have Scribes and Pharisees *et hoc genus omne*, with their foibles and their quibbles, any real interest for us? And then again, phrases such as "the Son of Man," "the Kingdom of God," "possessed of a devil," etc., have lost most of their savour. They belong, in the form in which they meet us in the New Testament, to a system of thought which has entirely passed away.

To realise all this is to be on the road to a right appreciation of Jesus of Nazareth. Let me frame a metaphor, or analogy. Jesus used, as for him was imperative, the tools of his day. We may now rightly regard those tools as finding their proper place only in an archæological museum. But the supreme skill of the workman-artist remains; and we may expect that when we put modern tools in his hand, he will rapidly adapt himself to them, and produce results at least as fine as in the days of heretofore.

Now, what are the things that matter to us in these days, about which we should value his inspiration and guidance?

I propose in what follows to touch upon such matters as these:—

(1) In point of seeming magnitude there are first to be considered the relations between the kingdom of this world, international matters and chiefly the problem of peace and war. Has Jesus a solution?

(2) There are the relations between different strata of society, employers and employed, rich and poor. You are faced with the problem of a competitive industrial system. Would Jesus condemn it, or condone it ?

(3) There are the relations between individuals. You have the problems of sex, of marriage and divorce. Would Jesus be illuminating about all this ?

(4) There are questions concerned with organised religion. What is really essential here ? Did Jesus found a church ? How is Christianity different from that which he intended ?

(5) There are to be faced problems that are the outcome of the modern point of view which is a scientific one. Would Jesus, who lived in an unscientific age, be in touch with the characteristic thought of to-day ?

(6) There are the age-long difficulties suggested by the words suffering and sin, pain and evil. Our thought on these matters is not the thought of 2,000 years ago. But is Jesus still essential in the consideration of them ?

(7) There are the contentions of those in our day who feel religion is outworn and look rather to the arts for a satisfaction of their ideals. Has Jesus an appeal for them ?

(8) There are problems of the personal life. May the *Imitatio Christi* still suffice us ?

(9) And lastly, there is the outlook upon the future. In front stands death, and after that—

what ? Can Jesus yet inspire us with a hope and a prospect ?

This is only a short list, but it is a fairly formidable one. Is Jesus a vital element in the solution or attempted solution of all these vast problems ? We shall perhaps find the answer to be both " yes " and " no." On the lowest showing Jesus has certainly been one of the two or three most dominant factors in human history in the last nineteen centuries. It would be surprising if he should fail us now.

But at the same time we may heed this caution. Every man is under the necessity of limiting his activities. There are many who could succeed in several different walks in life. But a choice has to be made. Possible interests and occupations are so multitudinous that a man, however able and hard-working, has to turn his back on a great many of them. Thus the number of subjects on which he will care to pronounce himself with any authority will be strictly limited. He may, indeed must, be ignorant of life in many of its aspects and activities. And in that case all we could do in debating his attitude towards them would be to argue from his known character and to divine its more or less probable reaction to the circumstances we are discussing.

Thus will it be with Jesus. I think we shall find him to be, as are most great men, something of a specialist. Within a certain range of subjects he is supreme, his touch sure, his word (we may

agree) infallible. But outside of this range we should have to proceed by inference. Perhaps, indeed, on some matters, both great and small, he will be silent for us altogether. And then we shall have to ask the reason why.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORLD

"He maketh wars to cease. . . ."

I SUPPOSE that the larger number of those who took part in the Great War were (at any rate nominally) Christians. And unquestionably many gave their lives then in the most utterly Christian spirit—the spirit of service which flinches not from death. But there are many of us who feel, nevertheless, that war is a most detestable thing, foul, cruel and in every way damnable.

Christianity seems to have no united voice in this matter; and herein Christianity fails. There is no one thing that so moves, stirs, upsets, overturns, devastates the whole world, that affects more widely and deeply every human activity, that touches more closely the interests, occupations and affections of men in their millions, than does war. And if Christianity claims to have a gospel, universal in its application, and to bring a spirit which is to be the one spirit animating all mankind, then it is almost incredible that she should upon this vast issue speak with so uncertain a voice or halt between two opinions.

Would her master, if he were here, be so unsure and so weakly acquiesce in things as they are? Let us see.

When Jesus was once asked what he thought would be the chief aim in a man's life he said that there were two things which were more important than anything else. One of them was that a man should endeavour to love God with every power of his being. The other was that he should love his fellow-men with no less intensity than he loved himself. This statement was made three days before his death;* when, that is, the hatred of men was closing on him, and God might seem to have forsaken him. It was made, in other words, with the whole experience of life behind him, and with the expectation of anything but love just in front of him. But it is deliberate and precise. The man who asked the question agreed with the perfection of the answer. And so Jesus encouraged him by telling him that he was very close to the real thing that mattered in life.

We are to consider here only one part of the answer, viz., that which concerns the relation between man and man. And especially I am concerned with those relations which subsist between men in their largest aggregates, *i.e.*, as organised nations or kingdoms.

To-day we are face to face with phenomena

* According to one account, the same summary of duty had been made to Jesus at an earlier time and approved of by him. That does not alter the impressiveness of it *repeated* here.

very unlike those with which Jesus was familiar. There were indeed different races and nationalities in his day. But all were held together by the might and overlordship of Rome. The *pax Romana* was a very real thing. Jesus did indeed on one occasion (if we may trust the reports), speak of "wars and rumours of wars," of "nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom"; but the reference is vague and shows no real appreciation of "international complications." * Generally speaking, we may say that the problem of the relations between independent kingdoms and empires, with divergent interests and historic animosities, each armed to the teeth against the other—that this problem was not envisaged by Jesus at all.

He was an untravelled Jew of Palestine, and as such inherited the somewhat narrow outlook of his nation. How far he came to transcend that we shall be brought to see. But our first impression is that the larger world was quite foreign to him. He had few dealings with what we may call foreigners; and their aims and manner of life are spoken of by him not in terms of intimate appreciation. The foreigner is not the man from whom one expects anything fine or noble. He may indeed be capable of ordinary courtesies—the foreigner will salute his friends. But Jesus usually mentions him only to point a contrast. We remember, for instance, how Jesus deprecates anxiety about such

* For one exception see pp. 34 *et seq.*

things as food and clothing—" these are the things sought after by the foreigner." Or again, he wishes his followers to realise the value of a life of service—" this lording it over others is what you find amongst foreigners." The foreigner is indeed an outsider ; of a recalcitrant brother Jesus says you may treat him " as a foreigner."

He sometimes seems surprised when he finds merit in those who are not of his own race. He is astonished that of the ten lepers " only the foreigner " is grateful for mercies received. He is astonished at the persistent trustfulness of the Canaanite woman who wanted him to heal her daughter. He is astonished at the faith of a Roman army captain, " not in Israel have I found anything like that." And yet sometimes his surprise is rather at the supineness of his own people, and he feels that even foreigners would have made a better response. Tyre and Sidon would long ago have repented if they had seen the things which had been done in some of these Galilæan towns.

He did not appear to consider that his own personal work lay amongst foreigners. " Let the children [his own people] first be satisfied ; " and again " I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." When he despatched some of his followers once on a little preaching tour he said, " Do not go among the Gentiles or enter a Samaritan town." Neither

he nor they during his lifetime made any attempt to win the outside world.

It is sometimes asked whether some of the injunctions he gives to his followers are practical politics when we seek to apply them to the relations between men in their larger aggregates. For instance, he says that if a man hits you on one cheek you are to offer him the other ; also, more generally, that you are to love your enemy. No Foreign Office could possibly act up to those principles, we say. And then we are apt to draw a distinction between private morality and public morality, and to say that Christianity gives a useful ideal for the former, but has little relevance to the latter. This conclusion seems disappointing. For states are far more potent for good or evil than most individuals, and we should like ideals for the former to be no less lofty than for the latter.

Perhaps it would be well to realise that a religion basing itself rigidly on the *ipsissima verba* of one who spoke 2,000 years ago is likely to be a disappointing religion. The actual words he said were, we may be sure, relevant to the occasion ; but to regard them as a solemn and infallible legislation for all time is absurd.

We are talking of the relations between modern states. To look for any ideas or instructions by Jesus immediately applicable to such things is to look for the impossible.

He said nothing about such things because he knew nothing about such things. They were to all intents and purposes beyond his vision.

And yet we must get him to speak to us. We shall, I feel sure, approach all our modern problems definitely the poorer in resource if we approach them without his extraordinary intuition, his penetrating insight to the very core of truth in things. He would most assuredly have much to say to us now were he upon earth. Could he, on his principles, be silent about such things as armaments or the League of Nations ?

To answer this we must look further into the works and words of the man long ago. So far I have pointed out that he had very little dealing with foreigners, and that the world outside was only somewhat dimly visualised. But I began with his statement that a man must love his neighbour with the same sincerity and reality that he loves himself. Clearly then the next question is, " Whom did Jesus wish us to regard as our neighbours ? " And to that he has a perfectly clear and direct answer. Your neighbour is the human being as such, be his nationality what it may, who needs your help. He tells the story of the Good Samaritan. It is too well-known to need repetition. But one point is sometimes missed. Jesus in the story does not say " you, my fellow-countryman, must be willing to do good turns to any man,

even if that man happens to be a foreigner." Rather he says, " Neighbourliness is a universal thing, and the foreigner, by doing kind acts to you, can and does show it just as effectively as you." There is no philosophising over the matter. Jesus knows instinctively that " love of neighbour " is a fundamental principle of universal application, and a thing therefore which once and for all shatters the barriers of race. It is surely significant that to illustrate his point he should deliberately have brought in the foreigner. For the relations between Jew and Samaritan were very strained, and the story would still have been a striking one if the third traveller had been a fellow countryman. But Jesus felt that neighbourliness, as love, can recognise no limitations. Did he not once say, " Whoever does the will of God, that is my brother and sister and mother " ?

It might with some plausibility be argued that Jesus only gradually came to realise the significance of the principles which he enunciates, and that the logic of the matter is forced upon him by circumstances. We have seen that at one time he was reluctant to work among, or permit his followers to work among, foreigners. But when it became clear that his own people would reject him and his message, then he felt matters must be brought to issue in a wider field. The clearest indications of this larger outlook are mostly to be found in

the record of the last few days of his life in Jerusalem.*

On one occasion he tells a story about some vine-dressers to whom a vine was leased. The owner sends for the fruit at its season. The vine-dressers ill-treat the messengers. At last the owner sends his son. They kill him. "What," says Jesus, "will the owner do to those vine-dressers?" His hearers reply, "He will destroy those men and lease out the vineyard to others." It is a pointed allusion to the rejection of himself and his teaching by his own people. The moral is clear: "This that I offer you will be taken from you and given to other nations."

There is another story of his which he seems to have told more than once, and a comparison of these relations is interesting. When he first tells it he is at a meal in a man's house. He has noticed the bad form shown by some of the guests in endeavouring to pick out the best places for themselves at the table. Each is thinking of self. These are not, he tells his host, really the worthiest people to have. He should invite poor people, who will be sincerely grateful. The story he relates is of a man who gave a supper to which he had invited many guests. When the time came these made excuses. They

* The only real exception is in the story of the army captain already alluded to, where Jesus says "Many will come from East and West and take their places beside Abraham," etc. (But even here our authorities differ as to the occasion when the words were spoken.)

had other things to do which interested them more. It is self again. So then the host sent out his servant to bring in all the poor people he could find—whether wandering in the lanes of the town or along the country roads or resting under the hedges. These will be happy and grateful. Here is a lesson in the right motives behind social amenities. Now on the later occasion when Jesus told this story he made some material alterations to suit his different purpose. It follows, in the narrative, close on the vine-dresser story, and has a similar meaning. The host is now a king, with soldiers at his command. The invited guests not only refuse to come, but ill-treat and even kill the servants sent to summon them. Then the king orders out his troops and destroys those murderers. Clearly the reference is to the way in which the Jews had rejected God's messengers, including Jesus himself. The outsiders now brought in from highways and byeways represent the foreigners, who were not of the " chosen " race.

You see how the outlook broadens. A day or two later Jesus is predicting that his " Gospel " shall be taken over the whole wide world. And then his imagination leaps far ahead to the " end," when " all nations " shall be gathered before the throne, and the " sheep " shall be separated from the " goats." It is interesting to notice that in this vision of the " end " the principle of judgment is precisely that expressed

in the Good Samaritan story—a man is good or bad as he has or has not acted in true neighbourly way to his fellow-men. Here is pure humanitarianism without any distinction of race.

Two days before he died Jesus was at table in a friend's house. A woman comes and pours precious ointment on his head. Hers is an act of pure love. "It is a beautiful thing she has done," he says, "it shall be spoken of throughout the whole world." He has no doubt at this moment that, whatever happens to him personally, the love of men, which was a central motive of his life, would be a thing preached everywhere. Acts of love were significant for all mankind.

But is this principle of universal love to be held without any qualification? Did Jesus by word or example never deviate from this? We may begin by noticing that Jesus certainly did not suppress in himself the natural feelings of annoyance at wrong conduct. Though he said once "be not angry," he evidently felt that there was such a thing as righteous anger. We are told that once he healed a man in a place of worship on the Sabbath day. Some self-righteous persons there thought he was in the wrong thus to break the sanctity of the day. He is vexed at their obtuseness, and looks on them "with anger." Again, when his friends wanted to prevent little children coming to him he was indignant with them. And he certainly

did not spare words when roused. "Hypocrite" is an epithet that stings, and it fell not infrequently from his lips when he would castigate those of whom he disapproved. And then we cannot fail to recall that scene in the temple when he turned out the buyers and sellers. That surely was the work of a controlled but blazing anger! "Be at peace with one another," was an injunction of his; and yet it is not peace at any price. There is a justifiable anger. And we may presume that, given the just reason, an angry nation is as blameless as an angry man.

We must next notice this. Jesus taught the duty of unlimited *willingness* to forgive; "until seventy times seven," he said. And yet in the very story by which he illustrated and enforced this we observe that forgiveness involves a condition. A king would settle up with his creditors. One who owes him millions and cannot pay entreats forbearance. The king forgives. This man then meets someone who owes him a few pounds. He insists on the payment of the debt. The king, hearing this, has the man brought to him again, reprimands him and sends him to prison. An impenitent offender must be punished. May we not conclude that an offending nation must be punished?

But the greatest efforts should always be made to win over the offender. Jesus was once very precise about this. He indicated three stages in the effort. First you try to win your brother over privately. If that fails, you try again with

two or three friends as witnesses and advisers. Again, if that fails, you bring the matter before the community or local assembly. If this body is unable to effect a reconciliation, the offender is to be treated as an outsider. There is no punishment mentioned, except such as results from being banished from the common life. It is tempting to turn this at once into a programme for the settlement of international difficulties. Two nations with a quarrel should try to settle it between themselves first. If that cannot be done then the facilities for the settlement of disputes offered by the League of Nations should be utilised in their various stages. And finally the offending state which will not accept the decisions of the League shall be treated as an outcast and pariah amongst the nations.

We may turn lastly to the question of *force*—would Jesus countenance the use of physical force in any circumstances? The scene in the Temple springs to the mind. But we should note that the "scourge of cords" is not in the earlier accounts, and in none of them is there the suggestion that he laid hands on *persons*. It is true that according to one writer he once said that he came "not to bring peace but a sword." But instead of "sword" the parallel record of another writer has "dissension." And the context shows that Jesus was anticipating the fact, for indeed it became a fact, that the acceptance or non-acceptance of him

and his message would bring discord even into family life. It is true again that on the last night of his life he is reported to have suggested the buying of swords to his followers. But it hardly seems that he meant to be taken literally. And indeed it is said that when one of them later in the evening actually used his weapon he was restrained by Jesus and told to put it away. One writer says that Jesus added the memorable words " all who draw the sword shall die by the sword."

We should call to mind an incident that happened earlier in his life. He and his friends one day are entering a Samaritan village. But the villagers will not have them and rudely repel them. It is distinctly irritating. Two at any rate of his friends would have liked to avenge the insult. But Jesus will have none of it, and quietly leads the way on to another village.* Had he not indeed once for all in the wilderness resisted the temptation to resort to force ?

Jesus expected that force would be used against himself and his followers. He advised them to escape from it if possible. But if it were not to be so they were to " rejoice " in it as those who should suffer for a good cause. The only time he did definitely allude to an actual war was when he spoke of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. If the words are his (which is something more than doubtful) then we are

* The words " Ye know not what spirit ye are of " are not in the genuine text, but one likes to think that Jesus spoke them.

to suppose that he anticipated the horrors of real combat. But war is not visualised as a problem. Just as persecutions would inevitably come upon his followers, so would persecution in the shape of foreign armies come upon Jerusalem. It was just inevitable. In the one case it was the reward of virtue in a wicked world ; in the other it was the punishment for sin in a world ruled by Providence. There is no reason to suppose that this kind of question ever came into the mind of Jesus, viz., " how can you imagine that this Father-God whom you preach, who loves all his children, can have any part or lot in the horribleness of war or give any sanction to it ? " We can only suppose that Jesus felt that the crisis of A.D. 70 was inevitable as some people felt that the crisis of A.D. 1914 was inevitable, and left it at that. Here we are, 1,900 years later, with the experience of the greatest of all wars behind us, and we have not yet decided whether war is compatible with the principles of Jesus. Is it to be wondered that he, with no such experience, just had not faced the problem ?

But *we* are compelled to. Another world war would be more deadly and destructive than the last. It would be an Armageddon shattering our whole civilisation. There are many benign influences at work to prevent, if possible, that abomination of desolation. Cannot Christianity provide the greatest influence of all ? Suppose all Christians of all nations and all

denominations were to make the astonishing declaration that they intended actually to take their master at his word, that they were resolved to follow his principles literally and without a peradventure, that as he said " love your neighbour as yourself " they flatly refused to slaughter their neighbours, that as he said " blessed are the peacemakers " they would never raise a finger to help the warmongers, that as he preached that all are brethren, children of the one loving Father, so they would seek every means to be " reconciled " to their brethren all over the world, and would laugh in the face of all those who idiotically imagine that war reconciles anybody or settles anything ; I say, suppose all this, and will you not have such a power at work as will be irresistible ? *

* Since the above words were written I have noticed the following pronouncement : " As one who was a minister at the time the Great War was declared, he [Mr. Lloyd George] proceeded, I say that if all the Churches of Christendom had suddenly come out and said, ' Halt, this murder must not begin,' there is not a minister or a monarch would have dared to have done it. . . ." (*Morning Post*, June 25th, 1928.)

CHAPTER V

THE MACHINE

"He maketh men to be of one mind . . ."

NATIONALITY divides men (as it were) vertically. We have to take note also of the horizontal divisions. In every country there are strata of society, from the "upper ten" to the "submerged tenth." And this social geology is a very much more complex matter now than it was in the days of Jesus. He addressed himself to people living under vastly simpler conditions. The social problems were, by comparison with those of our latter-day experience, few and simple. Indeed, so extraordinarily different was his world that we might almost despair of gaining from him any guidance on "the things that disturb our peace" in the immensely intricate structure of our modern society.

Jesus once told the story of an owner who at various hours of the day hired men to work in his vineyard. An agreement as to pay was made with those who started work earliest in the day, but not with the others. At the end of the day the employer gives equal pay to all—including those who had been at work only one hour. Jesus puts words of justification into his mouth, *i.e.*, it would seem, he quite approves of his

action. And yet who of us has not sympathised with the complaint of the men who had worked through all the day, and received no more than the last comers ?

Some might say that one who could tell and justify a story like that would not be one whom we could trust to adjudicate in a modern industrial dispute. And yet, has not Jesus even here got hold of a principle which is rather dear to us ? Note that the eleventh-hour labourers were *willing* to work, but had not been hired before. In other words, they were unemployed through no fault of their own. Are we not of opinion to-day that the unemployed should be helped by a " dole " ? This dole is possible because employers (and others) are taxed. In the story the employer is represented as doing voluntarily what his modern counterparts do by compulsion. And we do not hear from the leaders of labour that they are indignant because the unemployed get a sort of wage as well as those on full-time work—or that they would vastly object if the dole were larger still.

But let me start with this : Jesus, as I have reminded you, summarised the whole duty of man as consisting in love of God and love of neighbour. On an earlier occasion, and leaving out the God-ward aspect of man's life, he summarised this duty as follows : " Do unto others as you would they should do unto you." As is well known, this advice in a negative form had been given by many other teachers. But Jesus,

in turning it into a positive precept, makes it a living inspiration for progressive action. We have here once more, I think, one of those vital sayings which are timeless and infinitely adaptable. If it were universally acted on, we may be inclined to say that the whole life and structure of society would be altered. Would there any longer be the social inequalities that we see? Would poverty be allowed to exist any more? Would not class distinctions be obliterated? Would not all disputes be henceforward merely amiable efforts to dissipate misunderstandings? Have we not here a principle which cuts at the root of our whole competitive system in industry and commerce? If you are to act towards others as you would wish them to act towards you, how could you wish to cut your neighbour out, or through your greater efficiency be a success at the expense of your rivals?

Now, if we wish honestly to learn the mind of Jesus, we shall discover that a great deal which we are apt to consider important in life was to him a matter of indifference. You may say he was unpractical, but this whole business of getting and amassing money was to him an affair of very little consideration. To those who were his intimate friends he said, Give up your fishing, your job at the custom house or whatever it is, and come after me. And when he sent these same men out preaching he instructed them to take nothing but a stick for the journey—no money, etc. To a rich young man

he says, Go and sell all you have, give the proceeds away, and follow me.

No doubt these are special cases, and he does not make the same demand on all. But the thought of poverty does not arouse his strong indignation. " The poor ye have always with you " ; and he did not add the comment " the more shame on your so-called civilisation ! " According to one account he said, " Blessed are ye poor." This, no doubt, is not meant to imply that poverty is a virtue. But Jesus could look on poverty with equanimity, partly because he was indifferent to worldly possession, but partly also because riches were so dangerous a thing. He once had a conversation with his friends on this matter and astonished them much by saying what practically amounts to this—that a rich man would find it almost impossible to do the will of God.

He is reported to have said " Woe to you rich people, you have received your solace." The story of the rich man and Lazarus illustrates this. Abraham tells of no enormities perpetrated by the rich man ; he says only, to explain the man's punishment, you had your good things during your earthly life. In another story, that of the sower, we are told how the " word " will be " choked " in those who are beguiled by their riches. You may think to like your wealth and love your God at the same time, but, says Jesus, " you cannot serve God and Mammon " together. On the contrary, " guard

against every kind of covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in his wealth." It is what you can take with you beyond the grave that is of real importance. Jesus tells of the man who had laid up ample provision and thought to enjoy himself for many a year, but God said, " you fool, you shall die this very night." And so, upon another occasion, Jesus exhorts his hearers to " store up no treasures for themselves on earth," for earthly treasure is perishable. It is not what you have but what you are that matters. " What profit has a man if he gain the whole world at the expense of his own higher personal life ? " Finally, could anything be more decisive than this ?—" Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

And yet I should be rash if I drew the conclusion that Jesus would have suggested for universal application the bold economical experiment of the early Church where " not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common." If he called upon some people to make an act of complete renunciation, there were numerous others, quite his good friends, upon whom he made no such demand. He approved the generosity of Zaccheus, without requiring that he should give up *all* that he had. We hear of certain women who " ministered to him of their substance." Then there was Joseph of Arimathæa who (according to one

account) was able to be at once " a disciple of Jesus " and " rich." A sense of the responsibilities attached to wealth seems to be implied by the words " to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required ; and to whom they [? circumstances] commit much, of him will they ask the more." Jesus once (in the " Corban " story) pointed out how grave a dereliction of duty it was when a man did not use his money for the support of his necessitous parents. I recalled the fact just now that Jesus, in sending his friends out preaching, told them to take no money. But we should notice that on a later occasion and under different circumstances he said, " he who has a purse must take it now." And we know that he and his friends had a little common fund, of which Judas was the treasurer.

He seems to conceive that normally people will have the wherewithal to be charitable to others. " Give to the man who begs from you and turn not away from him who wants to borrow." Almsgiving is indeed as natural to the religious life as prayer, and Jesus is concerned only that it may be practised unostentatiously. The Good Samaritan is the perfect example of the good neighbour for all time. But he can be this just because he has something to give and is careful with his money, so that he can and does pay the exact hotel bill of the wounded traveller. Those approved at the last great arraignment are those who have fed the hungry,

given drink to the thirsty, entertained strangers, clothed the naked.

As I reflect upon it, I seem thus to discover in the teaching of Jesus a dual outlook which amounts almost to a contradiction. Now he seems to call for total renunciation, now for a careful administration of the goods you have. How are we to reconcile these ideals—how were they reconciled in his mind ?

Perhaps I shall be guiding you in the right direction for an answer if, at this point, I take into account a large and difficult problem, one which has divided all those who in recent years have treated of the life of Jesus into opposing camps. Briefly the matter lies thus. Some would put the strongest emphasis on those elements in his teaching which speak of an imminent end of the present world-order, a speedy second coming of " the Son of Man on the clouds of Heaven." That being so, his ethical teaching sinks into a subordinate place and is of use merely as a guide during the interim before this catastrophic *finale* materialises. Others would more or less ignore these apocalyptic visions and present Jesus to us primarily as the world's greatest ethical teacher and moral example. How are we to choose ? I can but briefly—and somewhat dogmatically —summarise here the conclusion to which I have come. Both elements (I would say) are there in Jesus' teaching and have to be accounted for. I would place in the forefront Jesus' own

statement " of that day or of that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Jesus is quite certain that " the day " will come some time or other, but he is quite ignorant when. Now, if we hold to this fact as a key to the matter, may we not suppose as follows ?

There were times when his desire to see the ultimate will of God carried out was so overwhelming, he was so impatient of delay, that he would speak of the final consummation in such vivid terms that his hearers gathered the impression that he expected it to come almost immediately. His sayings would thus be recorded with that *nuance*.

To what degree these narrations, in their present form, represent his actual expectations must, I suppose, for ever remain obscure. Are we willing or not to apply to him the dictum that " the wish is father to the thought " ?

But at other, and (shall I say ?) calmer moments, the vision of the end recedes into the distance. He is overwhelmed now with love and care for the frail and pitiful people he sees around him, his brothers, struggling with the trials and temptations of daily life. And then he would speak as if the present was alone that which mattered, when he would give such guidance and inspiration as would best help his friends and neighbours in their way through life. And coming from such a source the teaching would

have a permanent significance and avails still for his friends all these long years after.

To come back to the matters with which I am specially concerned in this chapter. Is it not now possible to understand that sometimes he would feel that to have and to value any material things was just too paltry for words; it was playing on the edge of a volcano. But at other times, realising that it was with these things that men, in actual fact, have to do day by day, he is anxious to help them in their insistent responsibilities. We need not, however, jump to the conclusion that, as the " end " seems indefinitely remote to us, the renunciation ideals of Jesus are of no value. There have been, there are always, those who feel that the call to " hasten the Kingdom " is so urgent that they will give up everything, as did their Master, to answer its appeal. God bless all idealists and visionaries, I say—they are the very salt of the earth !

But Jesus was upon the whole content to leave the structure of society as he found it.* Only he did say to ordinary men and women, toiling to make the wherewithal to live, that they were not to be worried about such things, " Be not anxious . . . what you shall eat or what you shall drink . . ." " Man shall not live by bread alone." He taught them to pray " Give us this day our daily bread " ; that is,

* It is significant that he had no word to say against an institution which seems to us utterly unchristian, viz., slavery.

he taught that God is immediately or ultimately concerned in providing for our material welfare.

Are you willing to accept this? Do you believe him when he says that if we will first seek after God and goodness all these material things " will be added "? Is it really any comfort to us to " behold the birds of heaven "? Do we, who have been taught something of the ceaseless and relentless " struggle for existence " in the natural world, do we think that the statement " they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns " suggests anything remotely resembling the actual facts? To say that " the lilies of the field " are better arrayed than " Solomon in all his glory " is picturesque, and may even be true, but can we accept the assumption that lies at the back of the contrast? Does Nature, in point of fact, give us the impression that there is a fatherly Providence to whom you may comfortably leave the chief care for your material necessities? Does it not rather " shriek " against any such creed? Does it not rather suggest that you must " fight the grim fight with all your might," for if you do not you will go under? We seem driven to the conclusion that if Jesus were among us to-day and shared our knowledge he just would not use this analogy. But if he could no longer use beautiful similes from a Nature presumed to be " care free," would he still be as certain that God looks after our material needs and we need never be anxious? I imagine he might say

" the essence of what I said is still true. Put first things first. Strive for the things that really matter. If that involves a certain risk—that you may suffer in the lesser, the material things—I call upon you to take that risk. For in the end he cannot be a loser who seeks the will of God."

And yet there are no indications that he would condemn a system which calls upon men to work for their living, which admits of the distinction between employers and employed, which allows rivalry and the rewards of success to those who by their wits and industry outstrip their fellows. " The labourer is worthy of his hire," he said. And, to illustrate his teaching, he tells of men working for their daily bread in various occupations, vine-dressers, fishermen, shepherds, agricultural labourers, etc., without an indication that he considers this unnecessary. I need not labour the point, for did not he himself work as village carpenter for the larger part of his life ?

He recognises the rights of employers ; the vine owner has the right to the produce of his vineyard at the season ; the master may justly expect that the steward over his household shall be faithful ; the man who has entrusted money to his servants wherewith to trade may properly be indignant with the servant who fails him ; a master can rightly call to account a steward who has wasted his property : a master again, may fittingly order his labourer to come and wait on him at supper.

And I would have you notice, too, that in the story of the "talents," and in the similar one of the "pounds," we have a *competitive* system at work. The servants are given money to trade withal, and those who do best are given greater rewards in the sense of large responsibilities—"Unto everyone that hath shall be given." Another point emerges in the "talents" story. The servants are given, to start with, differing amounts; there is not equality of opportunity. Now there can be little doubt that Jesus did *not* teach that all men are equal. Some are better qualified than others for the tasks of life. In character they are different, as is implied in the "sower" story. Jesus himself summoned all men to be his disciples, but he picked out twelve to be his Apostles. "Many are called but few chosen." Equality and fraternity are not the same thing. For there is one fact which makes all men brethren—that they are the children of the one Father. "Whoever does the will of God is my brother." "All ye are brethren." Men may be very different in their capacities and attainments, but they should always realise their brotherhood. This cuts at the root of all social snobbery. "Woe unto you Pharisees, for you love the chief seats . . ." And so Jesus himself had no hesitation in sitting down at table with those who were regarded as the social outcasts of his day.

Jesus, I would say, recognises one sort of

inequality—but he preaches another. " If any man would be first, he shall be last of all and minister of all." The ideal of humble service is that which Jesus impresses on those who would really follow him. It is the last who are first ; those who serve are those who are great. He himself " went about doing good." And his ideal undoubtedly was that you should live not for self, but for others. We come back to where we began—Do unto others as you wish they should do unto you.

Jesus, if he were here, would perhaps refuse to speak on political questions or pronounce in industrial disputes, as he refused once to arbitrate between two brothers who were quarrelling over an inheritance. But he would surely say " if you follow my golden rule you will find a solution to many of your problems." Let each man think what he would wish others to do to him and shape his conduct towards them accordingly.

No man wishes to live in a slum and so the Christian will not be content that others should do so.

No man likes to be cheated ; so the Christian will always be honest and straightforward in business relations.

No man would want to be stranded without work. The Christian as such will be solicitous about the problem of unemployment.

No one looks forward to a penurious old age. The Christian will be desirous to remove

anxiety on this score from the minds of those who are unable from their own resources to make provision for the evening time of life.

These and such as these are no doubt in the main economic problems. The Christian as such has no economic theories. Moreover he has no axe to grind. But he will provide that spirit of dissatisfaction, which cannot rest until justice is meted out to his fellowmen, and that moral urge which will stimulate and hearten those who are honestly trying to better the lot and brighten the lives of the less fortunate amongst their brethren.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEXES

"Thy Wife . . . as the Fruitful Vine."

A SINGLE man is a unit among millions. He is but a small part of a larger whole. He is related to the entire universe. But some of his relationships are extremely remote, while others are close and intimate. The larger the environment in which you place him, the smaller he seems. As just one amongst all the human beings on earth he is almost negligible. As a father in the midst of his family he is the centre of a little universe. Between these extremes he has relationships of all sorts. He is a human being, he is a supporter of the League, he is a patriot, he belongs to a profession, he works for a political party, he is a member of a club, he is on a town council, he is a pillar of some Bethel, he has the latch-key of a definite address—home.

Infinite are the ways in which he may express himself. For all but outstanding characters it may perhaps be said that the smaller the sphere the larger the man. In the country he is but a voter, in his home he owns a castle. He impinges imperceptibly upon an Empire, he may impinge dominantly on his family. And yet

the home cannot satisfy a man's aspirations. If it is his castle, it must not be his prison. He would adventure himself upon the wide sea of life. From his harbour of refuge he would explore wheresoever chance or a guiding Providence may lead him. And ever his hope is to reveal to men some undiscovered land.

Jesus began in a home, as do the rest of us. And it is for ever significant that he spent most of his life in that home. In a village amid the Galilæan hills, among " his own people," he lived all the formative and most of the working years of his earthly career. And he made the discovery that a prophet must not expect to find honour " in his native town, and amongst his kindred, and in his house." Where he is the most dominant he is the least discerned. Jesus had been a familiar figure as " the Carpenter." Of what greater significance was he than those very ordinary people, his brothers, James and Joses and the rest ? * We have two independent accounts of a visit (or visits) to Nazareth, and in both it is noted that these people with whom he was most familiar were filled with astonishment that he should suddenly have become a " personage " of account. He had evidently during all those years " kept the noiseless tenour of his way," and drawn no particular attention to himself. He had appeared just normal. Indeed, his words and

* As we read in the fourth Gospel, " How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? "

actions after he had left home appear to his family so unaccountable by contrast with what they had grown accustomed to, that they conclude he must have gone mad. They were so anxious that they made an effort to bring him home again, but the effort was fruitless.

We have a story which tells us that he went on a visit to Jerusalem with his parents when he was twelve years old. The boy shows great independence, so much so that his mother administers a gentle rebuke. The narrator concludes by telling us that he went back with his parents to Nazareth, and " was subject to them." Have we here an instance of precocious wisdom ? Had he even then some dim imagining of his destiny ? And did he realise that many years of chastening experience were necessary before he would be ready for his life's work ? He must not again show " independence " until he had acquired that balance which the discipline of a sequestered life, ordered and ordinary, alone could give him ?

At any rate, it is to that sort of life that he committed himself till the midway of manhood. And it is not pure conjecture which imagines his home life to have been rather wonderful. Here is a point which is worth consideration. Deliberately in after days he used one word for description of God which to his mind would more than any other bring home to people the ideal of what God is in his relation to men. The word was " Father." Can we withhold

credit from Joseph for this? To Jesus the word "Father" had very tender associations. Once he drove home a lesson on perseverance in prayer by saying "what father, if asked by his son for bread will give him a stone, or for fish and will give him a serpent?" There are saving graces in the worst of fathers. But I think we may conclude that Jesus, if he could elect to speak of the very God Himself as Father, must have had experience of one of the best. Of his mother I need not speak: has not a very large posterity given her semi-divine honours?

Happy childhood made its instant appeal to him. When he declared that a man must "receive" the Kingdom of God as a child, he is thinking of a child's trustful acceptance of authority, teachableness and response to the call of high ideals. When he told people they must turn and become as children he is thinking (as the context shows) of the child's unpushing, unassuming nature. A decent child may play at being a king—but he is under no illusion about it; for he knows that he is really quite an insignificant little body. Let him be, said Jesus, your model of humility. He would have us never despise these little ones or think they are of small worth, "for their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven." He would bless them with this manner of thought in mind—"the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Jesus said

that whoever " receives " a child is thus, and inevitably, in touch with himself, for the spirit of childhood will never call to him in vain.

Thus, although we are told nothing of the early years of Jesus of Nazareth, the impression we gather is that his child-life was happy and that there came to him increasingly the realisation of the value of a good home. But imperceptibly, as the child becomes the man, the thought of home takes on a fresh meaning. There is a looking forward, and the possibilities of a new home begin to take shape. There is adventure ahead. The man must seek a help-meet who shall together with him face life and create further life. Marriage is the beginning of a new home.

There is to-day no subject which engages such universal attention as this—the problem of sex—a phrase of wide implication, involving so many of the intimate relations between men and women. We would wish to know what Jesus thought on the whole difficult matter—what he had to say on such things as marriage, divorce, monogamy, etc.

He had evidently been much impressed by the narratives in Genesis ii. There we are told that in origin woman came from the very body of man. Adam and Eve therefore—the first married pair—were literally of one body or flesh. The conclusion of the writer is that every marriage re-enacts this, the man leaves his home, cleaves to his wife, and there is thus

again a " one-flesh " union. This does not necessarily imply monogamy, though it would seem to prohibit divorce. There is indeed the argument that God, by giving the first man only one wife, showed that monogamic marriage was His intention. And, if we accept Genesis as literal history, Jesus * was right in saying that " in the beginning " this was so, and in concluding that the later Mosaic legislation, permitting divorce, was a lapse from the Divine ideal. But if *we* can regard these ancient narratives only as primitive legend, what conclusions can we base on them? It is not possible for us now to look back upon a " time of man's innocency." We can no longer hold that God " instituted " indissoluble, monogamic marriage and that polygamy and divorce came only with a degenerating posterity. Any " Divine intention " in the matter is indeed difficult to discover. It is hardly possible that if Jesus were here now he would use the same argument.

But if his premises were precarious was his conclusion sound? If we do not know anything about a " beginning," and if a study of human history so far back as we can go reveals all manner of marriage methods, it is clearly impossible to speak of any one of them as " Divine."

Many advances in human conceptions have come not so much by patient effort as by sudden

* Who, of course, did so accept it; his intellectual equipment being that of the man of his age and nationality.

inspiration. A single man has said a thing which was new; and posterity has acclaimed it as for ever true. This may be so here. According to the conception of Jesus, marriage so identifies the two parties to it that a break away is inconceivable, or conceivable only in the terms of sin—adultery.* This is a "hard saying." It means that the very existence of a Divorce Court should be intolerable to the followers of Jesus. The statement was first made in public. His friends were evidently somewhat astounded, and questioned him again about it in private. But his answer was again absolute and unqualified. They reasoned that if he was right then it would really be better for a man to abstain from marriage altogether. We should give much to know how Jesus countered that, but it is doubtful if the sequel in our present narrative was actually spoken on the same occasion. Whether that be so or not, these subsequent words indicate another element in the thought of Jesus about the relations of men and women. He gives "this saying," which he commends to those who are capable of receiving it, viz., that "there are eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of the heavens." In other words, the call of the Kingdom is such that it welcomes those who

* The excepting clause in the first Gospel (if it be not an interpolation) may not have been intended as permitting divorce under certain circumstances, but merely as stating the fact that if a man puts away an unchaste woman *he* has not caused her to commit adultery—she has already done that for herself.

will abstain from marriage, and commends their abstention. For some it may be the highest ideal to forgo the use of the natural function of manhood.

Marriage was, for Jesus, a thing of Divine ordination. If contracted it must be preserved inviolable. But it is not every man's duty to marry. There is no spiritual tax on bachelors. Indeed, marriage is itself only a temporary expedient. In the ideal world of the future it will not exist. Some people who did not believe in a future life once came to Jesus with a question which they thought contained in itself an argument against the probability of such a life. By their law it was possible for a woman to have as husbands seven brothers in succession. Whose husband will she actually be in that future state? The dilemma stands thus: either Heaven connives at polyandry or there is no Heaven. Jesus' answer is that those who attain that other life neither marry nor are married. The marriage relation ceases. This sounds as if the entry to Heaven gave to all married parties a decree absolute. But a man and a woman who have loved and lived together devotedly on earth will not look forward to a Heaven which acts automatically as a divorce court.

No doubt, however, the thought is concerned with the physical side of marriage only. In one account it is said that there will be no marriage because men cannot die any more and because

they are equal to the angels. In other words, the physical basis of marriage here is the necessity for the propagating of the species; when there will be no more death there ceases to be a necessity. And further, to be as the angels is to be spirit, and the union of man and woman in the future will be spiritual. We cannot credit Jesus with a denial of the "marriage of true minds," and therefore the marriage denied here must be the physical union.

Here and now the material and spiritual in marriage are inextricably inter-related. But outside it men and women can have relationships which are either spiritual or carnal. There can be no doubt that in regard to the latter Jesus took the most austere view. You are breaking the marriage-bond if your thought only is lustful after any woman except her with whom you are "one flesh." A man must be prepared to take the most violent measures with himself rather than harbour any such longings. No doubt Jesus spoke the language of metaphor when he talked about "plucking out the eye" and "cutting off the hand" as being, for some, necessary conditions, if they would escape "gehenna." But clearly he does mean that these fleshly desires are something utterly to be repudiated, at any rate as between any who are not, by marriage, "of one flesh." A man cannot expect to have the vision of God unless he is "pure in heart."

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To such a question as this : " Is sexual intercourse in itself unclean ; or, at any rate, is it something from which a man who is endeavouring to live the noblest kind of life will abstain ? " we do not know what would be his answer.*

The family was a necessary and a sacred thing. But there could be a call to something far higher than either founding a family or remaining within one. Surely deeds are more telling than words. And so far as Jesus set himself as an example to follow, it is the example of one who chose the celibate life. It was not that he turned from women or regarded them, as was so common in ancient times and amongst oriental people, as inferior beings. He treated them always with courtesy and consideration. Many are the instances of his kindness to young and old of the other sex. But indeed, to introduce the word " sex " into a discussion of his relation to women is to strike a discordant note. A consideration of the story of " the woman who was a sinner " is instructive in this connection.

This woman wishes to testify boldly and publicly her love for Jesus. We would give much to know what is at the back of the narrative. The demonstration of affection for Jesus personally is so deep and sincere we can hardly imagine he had been no more to her than a preacher of righteousness. There must, I feel

* Amongst the things that " defile a man " are " fornications " (sexual intercourse between the unmarried) ; " adulteries " (intercourse between persons of whom one at least is married) ; " lasciviousness " (unrestrained lust, shameless indecency).

compelled to think, have been some previous intercourse, which, if not long, was of such a nature that she had lost her heart to him. She revered him as one who had revealed to her the possibilities of a purer, nobler life. But her woman's heart had been touched by the man. Her abandonment to him is such that she will here, and forgetful of onlookers, press kisses on his feet. . . His attitude is one of complete detachment. He accepts the demonstration as a natural thing and calmly uses it to point a moral in manners to his host. She is to him just a sinner who is sorry, and he tells her her sins are forgiven. " Go in peace."

Women are as attracted to him as are the men. He permits a number of them to " follow " him and his male disciples as he went round the country preaching ; and some of them, being well-to-do, helped to pay expenses. For the time being they had left their homes as had the men, and Jesus had no hesitation in asking for this renunciation. Peter once drew his attention to the fact that he and the others had given up " all " ; and this provokes the outburst, " There is no one who has left home or brethren or sisters or mother or father or children for my sake and the gospel who does not get a hundred times as much in this present world, homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands, and in the world to come life eternal." The new relationships into which people are brought with one another in following

Jesus will more than compensate for the old relationships of Nature. We are again reminded of his saying when once his mother and brethren stood without seeking him. " Whoever does the will of God, that is my brother and sister and mother." If ever the natural ties of home etc., should conflict with the call to follow Jesus then there must be no hesitation in severing those ties.*

No doubt there is an element of paradox in all this. Jesus teaches that a man should cleave to his wife, for they are one flesh ; yet he blesses the man who is willing to leave his wife. He teaches that a man shall honour his father and mother ; yet demands that a man shall " hate " them. He suggests that a man can rightly leave his children " for my sake " ; yet he can put his arms round a little child and say " whoever receives one of these little ones in my name receives me."

I suggest that we may again see the alternate emerging and dying away of the thought that the end is near at hand. If indeed it were to come in that generation, then truly the ties of home and family were almost, as it were, severed already. The only important thing was that will of God he had come to proclaim. The natural order was so soon to pass away—and the natural relationships with it ; how

* Such seems to be the significance of the seemingly harsh saying, " If any one comes to me and does not hate his father," etc.

should not men be in a fire of expectancy for the supernatural order which was to supersede it? But then again the vision fades into the light of common day. And therefore Peter's wife's mother must be healed of her fever so that again she can minister unto them. Jairus' little girl must be told to rise, and Jesus sees to it that food is given to her. The widow of Nain must have her son restored to her again. A prodigal son is to learn by experience that "there's no place like home."

There is thus no sign that Jesus set himself to break up happy families. He received hospitality in many houses; and this would hardly have been so if he had been known as a disturber of the home. We recall a scene in one house which shows his influence was far otherwise. Two sisters, Martha and Mary, welcome him as a guest. We know what followed. Martha is, with the utmost gentleness, rebuked for being over-fussy with her domestic duties. Mary is commended because she realises that while domesticity has its uses, it is not the be-all and end-all of life.

May we not—looking back upon the whole subject—say this? Jesus lived at a time and amongst a people where the problems of domestic life—with the whole question of sex at the back of them—were, in comparison with other matters, only of subsidiary moment?

Were he alive in our midst to-day, we may feel sure at any rate of this, that he would not

be just stereotyped and conservative in his views. His mind was ever daringly original. His standpoint never was " that which is must ever so be." Even on this divorce question his line and argument were his own, not exactly that of any other teacher of his time. What he would say on a wide view of the complex problems presented in our time by the relations of the sexes we can only conjecture. And yet our conjectures may be something more than mere guesses.

We have seen how he founded his pronouncement on the story of Genesis ii. But would he wish us to regard a conclusion as for ever infallible which was based on a premise we now know to be invalid ? I cannot think so. In a future chapter I shall try to show that he had a mind essentially scientific, and he would therefore be the last to cling to an argument, the logic of which had evaporated. He would study the facts, as we see them, and he would bring them into relation with some of those profound principles of his with which we are familiar. I cannot doubt that the misery of so many marriages would move his pity, and I find it difficult to believe that a law which permitted divorce on account of the persistent cruelty or hopeless insanity of one of the parties would be condemned by him as a concession to " the hardness of your hearts."

Let me not be misunderstood. Jesus would never harbour a thought which could " stain

the white radiance " of his mind, and nothing we may feel assured would be permitted by him that could detract from the highest ideals of purity. But I cannot picture him as turning a deaf ear to the stories of matrimonial tragedy, and on any *a priori* grounds forbidding the severance of the marriage bond which a sane and considered judgment condemns as having been an utter mistake.

Jesus was no legalist, and it was not his method to lay down laws, rigid and unalterable. If he was a puritan in the very highest sense of the word, he was also infinite in sympathy, and I cannot think he would refuse to understand our difficulties, or be just intransigent and unbending.

The civilised world is groping its way towards new conceptions of the relations between men and women, and towards a modification and adjustment of old-time marriage regulations. If the Churches take up a *non possumus* attitude they are merely standing aside from an insistent problem, and depriving humanity of a great treasure of chastened wisdom in the solution of it.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCHES

"Are your minds set upon righteousness, O ye congregation?"

If we ask the question whether Jesus formed or intended to be formed any organisation, such as the Church afterwards came to be, we are faced again with the problem of his outlook upon the future. Perhaps the point at issue may be most clearly indicated if I put side by side two statements that our record would have us believe he made within quite a short while, the one of the other. This is one: "Upon this rock I will build my Church . . ." And here is the other: "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom." Clearly there would be little use for any elaborate ecclesiastical structure if all was so soon to be brought to an end. And alternatively, if Jesus did indeed expect such a speedy termination, the word "Church" coming from his lips can be allowed to have very little of the significance that was afterwards attached to it.

The passage concerning the nearness of the end is by no means an isolated one. Here are

two more : " Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come ; " " verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished." We may have our doubts as to the precise terminology Jesus used, but at any rate we must conclude that he gave the impression, to some at least of his hearers, that the " end " was close at hand. This can hardly have been a totally false impression. And if it is thus the fact that there were times when he felt that God could not long delay his judgment, then we should hardly expect that he would be scheming to establish any stable or long-enduring institution.

Certainly we have to balance these statements with others to the effect that the Gospel " shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations." Whether Jesus ever expected anything like a " conversion " of the whole world is a debatable matter. Here I need but point out that to him " the world " was a very much lesser thing than it is to us. And the mere proclamation of a message " as a testimony " throughout the then known world would not, perhaps, have been visualised as a very arduous work, needing centuries for its accomplishment.

Such considerations as these do at any rate make it a matter for question whether Jesus intended to found a church, and, if so, what the word " church " meant to his mind. Now it is a well-known fact that Jesus in his lifetime did

have and hold together a little organisation of followers. There were his "Apostles," who lived a common life with him; and there were other disciples, both men and women, who were with him (if we may so put it) "off and on." That they were a recognisable body, differentiated from others,* may be gathered from at any rate one little incident. His friend John once told Jesus that they had stopped a man who was "casting out demons" in Jesus' name, "because he followed not us." But Jesus at once challenges the idea that there was anything sacrosanct about this their "organisation," such as it was. "If the man is effective in his work then he is really one of us, though not a 'proper' follower." One may say that it is an instance of "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Indeed, in this last quotation have we not again struck a principle of far-reaching importance? Whatever we may think of the historical accuracy of the story of the "withering of the fig-tree," at any rate I would affirm that it exactly typifies the judgment of Jesus. Profession is nothing, performance is everything. He concludes his vine-dressers story by pointing the moral to his own people, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits

* No doubt this was the more observable when, as happened, there came a break with the synagogue authorities, and he could no longer use their buildings for his teaching.

thereof." He himself was conscious of complete sincerity in his desire to do his Father's will, and he says that those who do the will of God are his real kin, his "brother, sister, mother." The bond of union is spiritual and depends on no institutional membership. The seed is sown upon all kinds of soil, but you know the best by its yield, "thirty, sixty, a hundredfold." A father has two sons, of whom one promises to do a work and fails, the other makes no promise, but in the end does the work. He who hears and does not is like a man who builds his house on the sands. . .

Jesus, then, expected results and the right sort of results. "There is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit; nor again a corrupt tree that bringeth forth good fruit." What, to his mind, were the things that mattered? The religious leaders of his day would no doubt have said that it was all-important to abide by the traditional religious usages. There was the temple at Jerusalem—a Mecca for pilgrims from all the world over. Was not the whole system of sacrifices of Divine origin and vital significance? There was the Law, with its complex and conscientious effort to meet the endless exigences of life. Could there be a higher call than to be a scholar under that teacher, with all scrupulousness?

We can have little doubt that all these things loomed very largely in the imagination of people throughout the country. In what way were

they regarded by Jesus? Our evidence is slight, but perhaps sufficient to supply an answer to this question. That Jesus did not ignore or despise these things one incident may serve to show. Of a leper whom he cleansed we are told that Jesus bid him go and present himself to the priest and make the offering prescribed by the Law for such cases. If we are to accept the testimony of the fourth gospel Jesus himself was accustomed to attend the Temple at Jerusalem at the times of the feasts. He said that he came not "to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it." * He came not to abrogate it wholly, but to give it a richer content. The Law was not for him in all its parts of equal value, for he drew a distinction between the tithing of small herbs and "the weightier matters of the Law."

What precise value he attached to the Sacrificial system in vogue in the Temple we do not know, but he made no attempt, and indeed showed no desire to abolish it. If he, on a certain occasion, "cleansed" the Temple, it was only of its unholy marketing: there was no attempt to disturb the ordinary course of the Temple ministrations. At another time he sat down in the Court of the women and watched people putting money into the Treasury. It was near Passover time, and wealthy worshippers were liberal. He had no comment to make save

* The further saying, "not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law . . ." is inconsistent with the general tenor of its context. It may have been spoken on another occasion, whose circumstances, if we knew them, would explain its hyperbolical character.

to praise the true liberality of the widow with her mite. There is no hint that he considered that all this money might have been better spent. And yet, if he did not disapprove, the general trend of his teaching gives the impression that the whole system had very little value in his eyes. I should gather from the first three Gospels that Temple worship was not to Jesus a thing of vital significance. Indeed, we have to make a very minute search before we can find any reference to it in his teaching. A man once came and asked him about the chief commandment, and Jesus spoke of love of God and love of the neighbour. The man's comment is that these two things are indeed better than " all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices," and Jesus praises the man for his discernment. Even in the last Gospel, which brings Jesus to the Temple with some frequency, the multitude of the daily " business " is hardly referred to. The building is merely the *mise-en-scène* for lengthy discourses and arguments. Witnesses against him at the last trial accused him of saying that he would destroy the Temple ; but this was evidently a distortion of what he actually said. It was always " my Father's house " to him. We may well believe that he spoke words—for they are consistent with his whole teaching—not unlike those recorded in the last Gospel, " the time is coming when you will be worshipping the Father neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem . . . when the

real worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

Had he respect for priests and was he a supporter of sacerdotalism? In a well-known story, when he would give examples of unworthy conduct, he chooses a priest and levite as typical; in contrast to the alien of Samaria, who acts praiseworthily. A man is judged by his character, not by his ecclesiastical office. "By their fruits . . ." again. It was apparently to priests (and others) that he said "the publicans and harlots go before you into the Kingdom of God." If we are to accept as authentic the predictions of his sufferings, Jesus was soon aware that his work and teaching would bring upon him the enmity of the hierarchy. When he drives the traffickers from the Temple he is ignoring entirely the priestly holders of office. A righteous thing needed to be done; if they would not do it, someone else must.

It was soon after this action that the priests and others came and asked him the question as to his "authority." What was the nature and source of his authority for doing "these things," *i.e.*, not only the cleansing of the Temple courts, but all his teaching * and other work. At once there flashed into Jesus' mind the parallel case of John. Here before him were ecclesiastical "authorities," people who held positions delegated to them in a proper, official way. They were the recognised pillars of the

* He taught "as one having authority."

ecclesiastical edifice. Should they not be respected as such, and what business had anyone else to interfere? And yet Jesus knew that he and John had the one "authority" that really mattered—the living Spirit, who impelled them to live and speak as they did. But how could the priests possibly acknowledge that? It would have been to demolish the very foundations of their sacerdotal pretensions.

Jesus, I would say then, made no sustained effort to "destroy" the established institution. But he certainly had no enthusiasm for it, and he was prepared to disregard it so far as it was moribund or to oppose it when it was antagonistic. It is difficult to suppose that he would have wished to set up an institution himself which would in any way resemble it—that is, an organisation which based its validity on an established or hereditary hierarchy; or that he would have pronounced ministrations to be valueless unless they depended for their virtue upon an external authority.

This conclusion is strengthened if we observe the implications of much of his work and teaching. He began by preaching in the Galilæan synagogues. But after a while opposition drove him into the open air. It made no difference. What he came to do could as well be done amid the hills and by the lake-side. He did not urge people to attend places of worship. But as he had "the words of life," people came to him from every quarter. He often taught in private

houses, and that (apparently) was what he expected his followers to do when he sent them out on preaching tours. There is no sign that he intended to " oppose " the synagogue any more than he did the Temple. Indeed, " opposition " does not describe his attitude towards the religious institution in which he was brought up. Did he not proclaim that " a house divided against itself could not stand ? " And he is said to have advised the people to do and observe whatever the Scribes and Pharisees said unto them—" for they sit in Moses' seat." By this we are probably meant to understand that so far as these teachers gave a message from their scriptures which was in real harmony with the true spirit of those scriptures, they were to be listened to. And yet how little vital was their usual teaching ! " Jesus," we read, " made a tour through all the towns and villages. . . . As he saw the crowds he was moved with pity for them ; they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd." Against a religious system which functioned he would assuredly say no word, but because it had failed he could not restrain himself.

And yet what they wanted—what we all want—is not far to seek. " Fear not little flock, your Father is well-pleased—delighted—to give you the Kingdom." Religion is not meant to be a stiff, formal, difficult thing. When Jesus first preached in his native place the people felt his message to be a " gracious " one ; and

he had spoken from a text which told of " release for the captives," " freedom for the oppressed." Did he not say " Come unto me ye that labour and are heavy-laden, my yoke is easy and my burden light ? " Was he not grateful that these things were hidden from the learned, as such, but revealed " unto babes," the simple-minded ? But the ordinary teachers had by their interpretations of scripture, and by their general attitude to the unlettered, taken away " the key " which unlocks the door " of knowledge." One of the few occasions on which we are permitted to see Jesus really angry was when his friends tried to prevent children coming to him. It gave him the opportunity of saying that if a man wishes to " receive the kingdom " the one condition is that he must be " like a child," with the child's trustful simplicity.

And this will lead him to be sorry if he has been naughty. Jesus certainly put *repentance* in the forefront of his teaching. It is the moral outlook that really matters. Men are not fundamentally bad. But God knows they cannot be happy unless they are good. And God is always searching for them as a woman looks for her lost coin. Men are very weak and helpless : but God will be after them as a shepherd who seeks and finds his lost sheep. Men have the elements of good in them, however far they may go wrong : and the prodigal had only to " come to himself " to be no longer

the lost son. Jesus tells of the Pharisee and the Publican in the Temple. The former is typical of the pride of formalism ; the latter is simple and genuine and sorry, and he, therefore, goes home " justified " rather than the other. Zacchæus is smitten with regrets and offers restitution, and so Jesus says " to-day is salvation come to this house." On some previous occasion Jesus had said that he came not to call " just men, but sinners."

In general the summons of Jesus is to a right life, and that has little to do with membership of an institution, orthodoxy of belief or ceremonial observance. He conceives that he may have adherents who are loud with their " Lord, Lord," and yet are " workers of iniquity." By this last expression he does not refer to evil livers, but just to formalists, those who are correct but unconverted. The really satisfactory man is the one who listens to the words of Jesus (*i.e.*, such moral instruction as is given in the great sermon) and acts upon them. He is as one who should be building a house, and digs deep down and lays his foundation on a rock.

It is clear, of course, that the followers of Jesus will form a visible fellowship ; some sort of an organism or institution is inevitable. If the Kingdom is like a hidden treasure, it is also like a mustard seed which grows to a " tree." If it is as a precious pearl which a man " possesses " for himself, it is also as a

drag-net which gathers fish of every sort. If the " word " is sown indiscriminately and the result all depends upon the kind of soil in which it falls, yet the " Kingdom " may also be visualised as a definite " field " which contains both wheat and tares. As we have seen, Jesus spoke of his " little flock," and on the last night of his life he said that as the shepherd would be smitten, the sheep of the flock would be scattered. There will be only one flock because there is only one shepherd. But assuredly I am right in thinking that the writer of the latest Gospel is correct in the distinction he draws between " flock " and " fold "—even if I might hesitate to admit that he is quoting the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. " Other sheep I have which are not of this fold . . . they shall become one flock ; one shepherd." He himself is the bond of attachment. " Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

It will naturally be argued that Jesus " ordained " two Sacraments, the one of initiation, the other of Communion, and that therefore he contemplated a clearly-defined organisation, with its form of admission and its permanent bond of membership. Of the Eucharist I shall speak later.* Here I will ask whether Jesus commanded a rite of baptism to be administered to those who would wish to profess themselves his followers. Now this surely is a fact which

* See pp. 122–126.

cannot be altogether ignored that (so far as our earliest records enlighten us) Jesus during his earthly lifetime spoke of " baptism " only by way of metaphor. Once he said " I have a baptism to be baptised with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished " ; the thought of his sufferings to come infinitely distressed him. And again, when two of his followers came to him with an ambitious request he asked them if they were prepared to be baptised with the baptism he was about to be baptised with, *i.e.*, share his martyrdom.

If we use the testimony of the fourth Gospel we find there a recognition of the practice of Christian baptism. Undoubtedly when that work appeared the rite was in regular use. But the author in the impression he is endeavouring to give of the mind of Christ appears anxious to lay stress on the spiritual fact rather than the material factor. He emphasises the contrast between John's baptism and that of Jesus—the former is " with water," the latter " with the Holy Spirit." He draws attention to the point that Jesus did not himself follow John's practice and baptise. In his third chapter the words * " of water " (occurring once only) really interrupt the consistency of the argument, which is a comparison between birth " of flesh " and birth " of spirit." That Jesus was baptised by John proves nothing as to *Christian* baptism,

* One might conjecture that the writer admitted the words as he had no polemic against sacramentalism as such.

for no one argues that they had the same intention. It shows that Jesus had not the spirit of the iconoclast. As he sent the cleansed leper to the priest, as he was willing to pay the temple tax, so here he says " it becometh us."

There remains the post-resurrection charge, " Make disciples of all the nations, baptising them. . . ." If at this point we decide not to be critical,* to what sort of conclusion shall we be prepared to come ? Jesus, we should say, initiated a rite which, upon acceptance, would be the sign and token that a man had become his disciple. But we have no proof that he would give to it an exclusive significance, as that it conveyed a spiritual reality which could be had in no other way.

We may sum up the thoughts of this chapter as follows :

A church is necessary and inevitable. A body of men bound together with common ideals, and urged with the desire to spread the knowledge of those ideals, must of necessity organise themselves. The beginnings of such organisation are indeed to be found within the lifetime of Jesus. But there is no sign that he would

* Though it is tempting. But the conservative, if driven from this stronghold, would take refuge in Acts i. 3, where Jesus is said to have spoken to his Apostles of " the things concerning the Kingdom of God." Baptism would then be one of these " things." That might be so, and it might not. We just do not know. You may believe, if you have sufficient faith, that a whole ecclesiastical polity lies embedded in Acts i. 3. But to build an edifice of certainty on a foundation of conjecture is a precarious proceeding.

have regarded such an institution as sacrosanct, or its officers as forming a " sacred " ministry. There is every sign that he considered (to put it quite coldly) that moral and spiritual values were the things—the only things—that really mattered, and that the existence and offices of the institution are justified only so far as they minister to that.

He once said that men do not put new wine into old bottles. It was an expressive phrase describing his own attitude to the religious organism of his day. And surely new wine will always burst old bottles. But a thing that people do not always realise is that it is the wine that matters, and not the bottles. If the Spirit is at work the institution may have to suffer.

Do we wish to release the power of Christ afresh in these days ? It may be a deep wisdom to acknowledge that no part or theory of ecclesiastical organisation is of the nature of the laws of the Medes and Persians, and that a living Church must always be willing to adapt itself, its methods and ministry, its services, its very structure, to the changing needs of a new day.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SCIENCES

"I will consider . . . the works of thy fingers."

JESUS once said, "nothing is hid, that shall not be made manifest; nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light." How astonishingly is this saying fulfilled in the story of modern science! The Universe in which man lives has yielded to him so many of her secrets, has unfolded so many of her marvels in the past hundred years. And the search and the discovery never end. The man of science is determined that nothing shall be hid, nor shall anything remain secret. The above-quoted apothegm had for Jesus and his hearers a restricted meaning and had, of course, no sort of reference to the revelations of modern knowledge. And yet there is no text which could be more aptly inscribed on the banner of triumphant science.

Jesus told those who were to carry on his work that they must do so in the spirit and after the manner of a householder, who should produce from his stores things new as well as old. That is the function of the teacher at all times —for there are ever the old facts to be presented

afresh, and persistently and continuously there are the new facts clamouring for recognition. Speaking generally, I might say that the classical side of an education gives you the former and the scientific the latter. Again, how much wider may be the application of this saying than anything that he or his hearers could have imagined!

Is it possible to bring him into this present-day world of scientific knowledge, scientific attainment, scientific method? Can we attempt to say how he would react to it all? There can be no question that science is more and more winning her way and coming into her day; that she is more and more dominating human thought, and that everything which stands in her way—everything which may be described as "superstitious" or "legendary," or "*a priori*," will have to give way, or be crushed as under a car of juggernaut.

There can be little doubt also that the religion of many people is permeated with elements which would answer to one or other of the above descriptory appellations. How far shall we hold that the founder of their religion is responsible for this? Or, on the other hand, is it permissible to argue that he would be the first to correct their errors, that, although he lived in a hopelessly unscientific age, his was a mind which would welcome modern knowledge, and indeed be open to every matter of natural fact and scientific induction?

For anyone who is intensely earnest after

moral purity, it is a high temptation to regard the material world as not only a source of evil, but as being in itself an evil thing. The physical it has often been argued, is contaminating, debasing; the spiritual, if desirous of free development, must be so far as possible released from it. But, as against this, Jesus looked on the natural world with genial eyes. He knew indeed that the body must be kept under—"man shall not live by bread alone"—and yet he was no ascetic, for they could call him "a glutton and a wine-bibber." The physical nature is always threatening to be dominant, and if undisciplined and uncontrolled there may be very soon moral disaster. But in the teaching of Jesus there is no sign that he regarded material things as in themselves evil. He seems rather to have held that they were just unmoral—of no ethical significance whatever. The Jewish teachers of his day had elaborated the curious doctrine that some material things, certain foods, were "clean," while others were "unclean." Jesus pronounced this to be an entirely untenable theory; and he did so by declaring roundly that no material thing entering a man's body could possibly defile him, morally or spiritually; the things that really defile a man, he said, come from within, the creations of his thought and will. This is quite clear and decisive. Whether Nature as a *process* shows any sign of moral or spiritual purpose is not here the point at issue. For the moment I

conclude only this—that no material thing in itself is either good or evil.

Jesus accepted the Natural universe (in the manner of us all) as just a "thing given." There it is. We are in the midst of it, part of it. Whether we do or do not like it, or aspects of it, at any rate we have to put up with it; it exists and persists. Man may reason about it, but he cannot reject it. Ceaselessly and wondrous silently it moves and works in its predestined way. Jesus once drew attention to the seed sown in the ground, which sprouts and shoots up, from the first little green blade showing itself till the ripening of the full-grown corn. Man cannot tell how this happens, he can only watch the process, and it seems to him that he is watching something "automatic" (this is the word Jesus used), something that works "of itself." Man can trust Nature; he can (that is) be pretty sure that, just because she is a great machine, she will go on in the future precisely as she always has done in the past, her abiding logic inspires confidence. As Jesus once said to the people, "when you see a cloud rise in the west, you say 'there is a shower coming,' and so it is: when you feel the south wind blow, you say 'there will be heat,' and so it is." Nature seems synonymous with inevitability. Things happen in an orderly, more or less predictable way, and man has to fit himself into the scheme as best he may.

I will now go a step further and say that in the view of Jesus not only the items but the processes of Nature are without moral or spiritual significance, for we call to mind his observation that the sun shines on the evil as well as on the good, and the rain refreshes the unjust as much as the just. Sometimes when a natural catastrophe takes its indifferent toll of human life people are apt to complain of Providence, and to draw conclusions. But, said Jesus, you must certainly not draw conclusions of an ethical character. He reminded his hearers once of a recent disaster : a tower had tumbled down and killed eighteen men. Are we to say that these men were being punished because of their abnormal sinfulness ? By no means—an accident like that has no occult meaning at all. These things happen, but you must not consider them as divine judgments.*

Has Nature then no meaning ? Has it nothing to teach man for his moral and spiritual betterment ? If a negative answer should be given to this question, then there would, very justly, come the further question, " What have you to say of the parables of Jesus ? Was he not a student of Nature, and from his observation of natural facts and Nature's ways did he not deduce some of his most profound principles ? " It is certainly true that he went to Nature, and some of his most telling illustrations are drawn

* Cp. " Neither did this man sin, nor his parents," of the fourth Gospel (ninth chapter).

from Nature. But are they more than illustrations? They elucidate his meaning, but can you say they prove his point? Surely not.

Take, for example, the story of the Sower: the adventures of the seed do not prove the adventures of the "word"—they only illustrate it: and when it is said that *this* soil is "good" and *that* otherwise, the words are surely not used in an ethical sense. Again, the fig tree, in putting out leaves, is a herald of summer, and so "teaches" that when certain things shall happen then the second coming "is at hand"; but the "teaching" is by way of analogy, and does not signify that there is any spiritual virtue in the series—"fig leaves . . . summer." In the tares story the words "as therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world," do not mean that the fate of the tares is a proof of that final consummation. In brief, we may say that the Nature parables are but illustrations of spiritual facts or processes. From them, at any rate, we should not gather that Jesus considered the physical universe to be full of inner, mysterious meaning.

This, of course, does not mean that Nature can be explained without reference to God. Jesus was one of those who "*had* need of that hypothesis." The world of Nature is God's world. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unless your Father wills it." God feeds

the ravens and clothes the lilies. He is a particular Providence whose care for his created things is instant and constant. There is, of course, no thought here of an evolutionary process with a purpose working itself out. Nature is just there as you see it and God keeps it going. It depends upon God, but does not display him ; it is an effluent of his will, but does not exhibit his mind.*

The ordinary facts of life show that man has a certain power over the material world. He can cultivate the soil, he can fish in the sea, he can shepherd his flocks and so on ; and yet, as we have already noticed, Jesus perceived the limitations of human power—the processes of growth are " automatic " and inexplicable. Sometimes, indeed, he seems to have urged that men could have far greater influence over Nature than as yet had entered their minds. He told his followers that if they had sufficient " faith " they could remove a mountain and cast it into the sea.† This language can hardly be judged as mere parable or metaphor. If you study the records of Jesus' life you cannot but feel that those records mean you to gain the impression that Jesus himself had a " miraculous " command over Nature, and desired to pass these powers on to his immediate followers.

I am thus brought up against the problem of

* Or only very restrictedly.

† An independent saying refers to the uprooting and removal of a " sycamine tree."

miracles. That the narratives of Jesus' life as we have them are permeated with the miraculous must be admitted. But we cannot be sure that we have anywhere the stories of eye-witnesses related at first hand. Tradition very rapidly becomes distorted ; and the prejudices of the time would be all in favour of, rather than against, the introduction, or at any rate the stressing of the miraculous element. To-day, on the contrary, it is far easier for us to believe that, for instance, the story of a miraculous feeding of five thousand people is one on which many imaginations have been at work than that it is a trustworthy account of something that happened precisely as related.

We do not perhaps feel much difficulty in accepting the *healing* wonders. The personality of Jesus was so compelling, his will so masterful, his sympathy so intimate, his power of conjuring belief in himself so strong, that we might well expect to hear of therapeutic incidents which would strike his contemporaries as miraculous.

We can detect the fact that he did not himself rely much on the expectation of miraculous interferences with the course of Nature. Read the story of the temptation at the beginning of his public career ; and enforce the impression by recalling the words he is related to have said at the end of it, when he was being arrested in the garden—" Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father and he shall even now send me twelve legions of angels ? "

It is worthy of notice, in regard to these healing "miracles," that there are some instances where Jesus is reported to have acted as might an ordinary physician of his day. When an epileptic boy is brought to him, before proceeding with the "cure," he asks, "how long has he been like this?" Evidently the father thinks the physician wishes to know the facts of the case, and proceeds to relate them; knowledge of the symptoms are necessary for a diagnosis. Again, we read on two occasions that Jesus used his spittle in performing a work of healing; in one he touches with it the tongue of a man who has an impediment in his speech; in the other he spat on the eyes of a blind man. There is evidence to show that a belief existed in those days that human saliva had medicinal value. That Jesus should have used any "means" to effect cures would be repugnant to later Christian thought, and it is a reasonable conjecture that he may have done so more often than our present records testify.* Jesus did not go about as a wondermonger. Touches in two other stories of the kind of miracle the modern mind finds it difficult to accept are worth observing. Concerning a damsel whom he is said to have raised from the dead we are told that he instructed the parents to give her some food. And before feeding the five thousand he is reported to have

* It is to be noted that both the above stories come from our earliest Gospel, and have not been copied into the later ones.

asked "how many loaves have you got?" Nature and the gifts of Nature are to be relied on. God helps those who help themselves. We live in an environment which is kindly and beneficent. We are not to be anxious about our food and drink and clothing. There is a sufficiency of these things. Surely if God supplies the material needs of birds and flowers he will not fail us! And if there is no need of a miracle for the former, why should there be for the latter?

The modern man will agree in the main with the conclusions of Jesus, though he may stress rather different premises. He will perhaps say very much less or nothing at all about God and his providence. But he will agree that if poverty and hunger exist among human beings this is not the fault of Nature. The fault lies largely with economic conditions, humanly and faultily devised. The world of Nature offers abundantly all that is needful for the material welfare of the sons of men.

But (it may be objected), are we not putting too great a strain upon the imagination in trying to bring the thought and point of view of a man of Palestine of 2,000 years ago into relation with the mental life of to-day, and especially in that which is most characteristic of this day and wherein it differs most completely from those far-off times and climes, viz., its scientific attitude towards all phenomena? Is it not best to confine the authority of Jesus to the moral

and spiritual sphere where admittedly he was supreme, and where the facts and problems remain more or less the same through the centuries? This might be both feasible and satisfactory if we could keep a clear line of demarcation between things spiritual and things material. But this surely becomes less and less possible every day. The universe is one thing as a human person is one thing. You cannot, in fact, though you may in discussion, divide a man into two things, body and soul. But actually he is one self, with material and spiritual indissolubly related. And the world is one thing, where also spiritual and material cannot be divorced the one from the other. So science, which approaches reality on the material side, and religion, which approaches it on the spiritual, cannot be separated by an impassable gulf. Neither can be neglected in any exposition of the universe which aims at comprehension. And it is becoming increasingly realised that religion has much to learn from science, especially in the use of scientific method for the discovery of truth.

Now the relation of all this to the problem of Jesus lies here. If it should be discovered that his manner of thought was entirely unscientific—that his whole mentality belongs to a past age—that his processes of reasoning were such as would be ruled out of court at the present day; if his view of, or attitude towards, the vast realm of facts which science opens to

our study and interprets to our understanding was such as might be termed obscurantist, that is, in radical opposition to all that we mean by progress in knowledge and enlightenment: then indeed might men despair of him and say that while he was entirely admirable in the manners of his life, and also in dealing with a restricted range of subjects, yet that to confine oneself to his world would be to live in a little island without suspicion of great continents beyond the seas. And the man of to-day does not want to be a Lilliputian. But in contradiction of all this, I believe it is possible to show that Jesus had a mind which was essentially scientific, and which would find itself quite at home amid the problems and in the *milieu* of to-day.

But it is necessary first to make this point. The scientific man knows no authority but ascertained facts, and those facts he finds in the observable phenomena of the universe. Now, as we have seen, Jesus used the world of Nature as a source of illustration, not as a ground of proof. Yet he had that, nevertheless, which was to him, and would have been to all his hearers, a realm of authoritative facts. The *statements of scripture* were to him what the phenomena of Nature are to a modern scientist. And we should be prepared to admit that this was in keeping with the knowledge and mentality of his age and race. Had it been otherwise he would have been an intellectual anachronism.

We have then this curious situation that whereas a modern scientist goes for his authoritative facts to Nature, and would use literature only by way of illustration, Jesus goes for his facts to the sacred literature, and to Nature for his illustrations only. The point I am endeavouring to make is this—that allowing for the different intellectual atmosphere between Palestine in A.D. 28 and England in A.D. 1928, it was as possible for a man to have a scientific mind and to use scientific method then and there as here and now. And that if Jesus was such a man it will be possible to draw conclusions as to what would be his attitude towards our present-day knowledge and problems.

The one authoritative thing for the scientist is fact as we understand it now, and I would show that it is fact as understood then which was authoritative for Jesus. We may choose instances of this almost at random. To the Jurist who asked him about eternal life, he said "what is written in the law? What do you read there?" At the end of the vine-dressers story, when he has told of their fate, the people say "God forbid." But Jesus continues, "then what does the Scripture mean?" and quotes a text. When the Sadduces come to him—people who did not believe in a resurrection—he at once points out a trenchant fact they had overlooked, "have you not read in the book of Moses . . . how God said . . ." and draws from it a logical conclusion.

It is not indeed always the sacred word which is quoted—there are other authoritative facts. When the messengers of John came to him with the question whether he were the Messiah or not, he said " go and report to John what you have seen and heard," and let him draw his conclusions from those facts. Again, when he is approached over the matter of the tribute money he sends for a coin and points to Cæsar's likeness and inscription on it—there is an indisputable fact from which you can only draw one conclusion.

And you must take into account *all* the facts, and not fall into the error of drawing a hasty conclusion from one or two smaller phenomena while you forget those which are larger, more inclusive and more ultimate. Facts must be not only registered but weighed. I trust it may not seem a rough intrusion into an intimate revelation if I point out how this may be observed in the story of the temptation. The evil one quotes scripture : Jesus counters it with a deeper scripture. When his disciples are rebuked for gathering ears of corn on the Sabbath, Jesus points to the example of David and his men, who once ate the (forbidden) shewbread. It might have been answered that this was exceptional ; and so Jesus concludes the matter by quoting a larger and more inclusive fact, " I (*i.e.*, God) will have mercy and not sacrifice." In the Corban story a " tradition of the elders " is compared adversely

with a far more fundamental fact—the fifth commandment. Or, once more, the law of Moses permitted divorce under certain circumstances, but Jesus goes behind that to the primal facts of the Garden of Eden. Here is scientific method—go to the facts, and get behind the (as it were) superficial ones to those that are really conclusive.* Lastly, if you meet with facts that do not fit in with a previously established hypothesis, you must not of course brush them aside, but wait for further light. In the Gospel story we have at any rate one instance of such " suspended judgment." I refer to the question " how can the Scribes say that the Christ is David's Son ? " the quotation from Ps. cx. which follows, and the further question, " David here calls him Lord—then how can he be his son ? " No explanation is attempted.†

There is a further consideration I would add here. If Scriptural statements were for Jesus the equivalent of our scientific facts, and if he was meticulously true to his authorities, may we not have here some element in explanation of the " Apocalyptic " visions ? These are largely given in the words of ancient scripture. May not the fact that (sometimes at any rate) this " apocalyptic " filled so large a space in the mind of Jesus be due to his scrupulous

* *E.g.*, a whale is a fish—does it not live in the water and behave itself as a fish ? And yet go deeper, study its anatomy and you find it is not a fish.

† *We* should of course say that as the Psalm was not written by David the dilemma does not arise.

anxiety to be true to his authorities? If the Scriptures told of all these terrible things-to-be, then indeed they must be: the expectation was as natural as would be our expectation of unsettled or stormy weather if so predicted by the meteorologists. Jesus has sometimes been described as a dreamy and unpractical "visionary." Perhaps we should rather say that he was too honestly and logically scientific.

If the contentions of this chapter are true, a good many conclusions lie close at hand; among them these (*a*) there could be for Jesus no real conflict between science and religion. His Father could not contradict himself. (*b*) Jesus would bless all those who take for their motto "The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." (*c*) And so in the religion we now preach as his, he would wish us to eliminate all that is superstitious, ill-founded, or less scrupulously faithful to fact than the best science. (*d*) While lastly, he would surely urge us all to be ever learning, ever seeking for more light—"Have ye never read . . . ?"

CHAPTER IX

THE SINNERS

"God is provoked every day"

It is characteristic of man that he should be obsessed with the idea that his own age is the worst age, the age that beyond all that have gone before harbours ills and dangers the most sorry and most menacing. It is not indeed the worst conceivable age, but, unless something tremendously important and effective is done, that superlatively deplorable age is but on the morrow and may bring irredeemable disaster. Jesus was not free of this characteristic. He apostrophised the people of his time as an "adulterous and sinful generation," "a faithless and perverse generation." He was persuaded that Jonah had an easier task at Nineveh than had he (Jesus) in Galilee; he told his hearers they might well be put to shame if they remembered the example of the Queen of far-away Ethiopia.

At times he spoke of them with gentle irony —they were like children sitting in the market place, who will not make any response, whatever games are suggested. At other times he was fiercely denunciatory—the iniquities of the past are consummated in the present and the

punishment of it all shall be charged upon "this" generation. Jesus foresaw impending calamities—"I tell you, the present generation shall not pass away till all this happens." He censured unmercifully some of the townlets with which he was familiar; they were more stiff-necked and unrepentant than would be such heathen towns as Tyre and Sidon, whom the prophets had frequently denounced for their iniquity. And yet, I suppose, *we* should be inclined to think that the sins of any modern Babylon were a far weightier evil than those of Bethsaida, and the perversities of our present civilisation more heinous than the peccadilloes of Chorazin!

A man once asked Jesus "are those who are in the way of salvation few in number?" The answer he received was this, "strain every nerve to enter through the narrow door," for there will be "many" who will try when the door has been closed and will fail. Here is another saying of Jesus, "Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad the road that leads to destruction, and many enter that way; while narrow is the gate and straitened the road that leads to life, and few there are that find it." And again, he said that he would turn "many" away on the "last day," saying to them, "I never knew you—depart from my presence ye workers of iniquity."

These all sound to be the words of one who was none too hopeful of his fellow men. And

the same seemingly pessimistic note is struck in such aphorisms as these : " Howbeit, when the Son of man comes shall he find the faith on the earth ? " and " because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of many shall wax cold," and " even the elect " will find it difficult not to be " lead astray." Indeed, to find illustrations for his sombre judgment on the future he has to go back to the days of Noah, when the majority of mankind merited and met destruction ; or to the tragedy of Sodom, when practically a whole population was overwhelmed in the divine punishment. How poignant were his words to the women who lamented him on his way to Calvary—" Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children ! "

These references are sufficient to show that Jesus was no shallow optimist. And in finding as we shall find, that he had much else to say of a very different nature, we must not forget that there was that in him which would go out in sympathy with those to-day, and there are not a few of them, who take a pessimistic view of human nature and of that unknown future which lies before us.

He himself was soon aware of the relentless hatred which was pursuing him. He knew that however " good " his " tidings," there were men of such a sort as would oppose this good and call it evil, saying that he had his power from " the prince of the devils." And so he

did not expect his work to be a "sweeping success." He knew that even when there was not opposition, there would be apathy. When he sent his followers to take his message out to the towns and villages of Galilee he warned them that they were not everywhere to expect good results—they must be prepared to shake off the dust of their feet as they went forth from places which would not receive them.

A prophet is bound to be impatient. The greater his zeal the less will he be tolerant of delay, of the gradual working out of principles and ideals in a slow-pacing history. He wants things done here and now, he burns to see his whole purpose accomplished within a calculable space of time. He sees the obstacles—the wave of his enthusiasm would leap over them; he is conscious of his foes—the impetuosity of his passion would overwhelm them. Jesus is reported to have spoken such words as these: "I tell you truly, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death till they see the coming of God's reign with power." Whether he actually was so precise in his terminology we may perhaps doubt; but there certainly was in his teaching this element of impatience, this expectation that God would not for ever wait upon the good pleasure of man, but would soon show his sovran power. However much his followers may afterwards have crossed the t's and dotted the i's of this part of his Gospel, it is clear they did not invent it.

He had given the impression of one who was confident that the Divine purpose would fulfil itself—with, it may be, many catastrophic happenings, in a measurable time.

And he indulged these expectations because he was under no delusions as to actual facts. One might say that Jesus was pessimistic about men in the mass, while (as we shall see) he was optimistic about man as an individual. The sower may sow his seed ; it is quite certain that in much of the soil it will fail. Now what is the reason of this ? Why should so many of us think now, as Jesus thought then, that God cannot expect high ideals to permeate the mass of mankind ? What forces of evil are in and around men, hindering and blinding them ? In some respects the people of long ago would have found it easier to answer such questions than we do. When Jesus told of his " temptation " he spoke of " Satan " on the one hand who tempted him, and on the other of " angels " who ministered to him. He shared the view that many of the sick people brought to him were " possessed with devils." He conceived that he used the power of the spirit of God in him to " cast out " these demons. They were " unclean " things. And Jesus was able to think that " when an unclean spirit leaves a man, it roams through dry places in search of refreshment," and that it can go off " to fetch seven other spirits worse than itself," and that these may " enter " a man. Naturally, if all

this sort of devilry is going on behind the scenes, poor unfortunate man is at a great disadvantage, his frequent failure becomes explicable. Jesus is said to have addressed Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan has obtained the right to sift you [all of you] like wheat;" and in the sower story he represents the "evil one" as snatching away the good seed that has been sown in a man's heart. Now, if it were possible for us to believe that we are surrounded and can be "manipulated" by unseen, evil personalities, then for us there can be no "problem" of evil. A problem indeed still exists, but it is one for the demons rather than for men—why *they* are thus evil.

Temptation, however, is not always demonic. There are many things in life which put a man on trial, and whether a man be tempted little or much depends on the will of God—for Jesus has taught us to pray "Lead us not into temptation."* That God should guide the circumstances which may produce sin is a thought at once terrifying and consoling. It is consoling, for it will assure us that "temptation" itself is not maleficently intended; and assuredly the most awe-ful experience would be the sense that God was completely absent: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." But terrifying too, for does it not mean that it is of the very warp and woof of the Divine intention not only that man should have

* "Deliver us from evil" may mean "evil generally," or "the evil one," the devil; we cannot be sure.

it in his power to sin, but also be provided with opportunity for doing so ? In the story of the prodigal son, the father (clearly meant to represent God) gives without hesitation into the hands of his younger son that " substance " which is to be the cause of his ruin.

There are many sources of evil. There are things in the world which, although in themselves they are morally indifferent, may yet become productive of sin in man. He may be tempted to serve " Mammon," and there is no more exacting master than this god of avarice. The actual items of a rich man's wealth are neither good nor bad, and yet it is clear that Jesus considered the love of riches to be one of the greatest obstacles to high endeavour : the simile of the camel and the needle's eye comes into the mind at once. " How hardly shall those who have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." Again, besides the " deceitfulness of riches " there are the " cares of the world," which " choke " our ideals. And yet it is not these circumstances themselves which are evil. If people would not be worried all would be well ; the mischief is that the Marthas of the world are always " anxious and troubled about many things."

We get perhaps to the centre of Jesus' thought about evil when we hear him say " That which proceeds out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, thoughts that are evil proceed."

And again, " out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." One man has a treasure of good within, another a treasure of evil, and from such stores they bring forth accordingly. What matter the cleansings of cups and platters when " the inward part is full of extortion and bitterness ? "

God is good ; the external world has no ethical qualities ; evil is within man. If Jesus were with us in the flesh to-day he would no longer think in terms of demoniacal possession, he would not suppose that man was surrounded and could be tempted by invisible spirits of evil. Would he not say that the only evil is an evil will,* and that the presence of evil outside our human personality is caused by the existence of the evil will in other human personalities ? The problem of evil in other words is a problem of psychology. We are not to figure evil as " lurking in the thievish corner of the streets "— a furtive thing which may spring out upon you at any moment from God knows where. There is a telling phrase in the story of the prodigal son on which it would be impossible to lay too much stress. The turning point in the son's career occurs " when he came to himself." The whole trouble had been " himself " all the way through. His own will and nothing else had led him astray, his own will it is that brings

* Note how in the sermon Jesus goes behind actions to their source in the inner man, from murder to anger, from adultery to lust.

him back again. A man has just to be true to his real self and evil no longer exists.

Here lies the explanation of the stress laid by Jesus on " repentance," for repentance means just " change of mind." On the one hand, " except ye repent ye also shall likewise perish " ; on the other, " there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." And this " change of mind " at once merits its reward, " if your brother sins against you seven times in the day and seven times turns again to you saying ' I repent ' ; you shall forgive him." Moreover, as it should be on earth it certainly is in heaven. " If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." To a penitent Zacchaeus Jesus says, " to-day is salvation come to this house " ; to a penitent thief on the cross he says " To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." And if evil is so quickly and easily overcome, well might Jesus exclaim " I beheld—as it were lightning—Satan fall from Heaven."

But this " change of mind," this " repentance," is often not so readily come at, for the " will " of man is not always that " free " thing the phrase would have it to be. It is biased towards evil in many ways. A man is an indivisible unit ; body and soul are one in him. His will regarded in isolation may be called " free." But actually it is not and cannot be isolated ; it is a function of the whole man, and that man is in part material and the material

part of man is not unbiased ; his body clamours to his will " I want " ; and the two being a unity, how is his will entirely " free " ? Again, man inherits his physical nature from his past ancestry, and but a short while back in geological times these ancestors were in the jungle. And from this ancestry he inherits much beside his body. He has a whole group of inherited instincts, and these instincts do not come to him in what might be called " pure " form, they come with a history ; and, in the course of that history, some may have become italicised and emphasised. How then is he free ? As free as the prisoner in a dungeon ! There *is* a way out—but what resource and ingenuity and patience are required before an escape is made ! Or, yet again, here is a child brought up (save the mark !) amid squalor, penury, vice ; where from earliest days the pitiless reality has prevented the upspringing of any green shoots of gentleness, nobility or true love—will it not be cruel mockery to speak of those thus nurtured as having " free " will ?

Now it was not for nothing that Jesus was called the " friend of sinners." Surely he realised the disabilities under which so many live. The sins of these poor sinners was not to him a matter calling for wonder, or contempt, but for pity. It pleased him indeed to think of himself as a doctor amid these sick souls. He mingled freely with them, saying, " those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those

who are ill." There is a sense, or there are circumstances in which sin may be regarded as a disease. A paralytic is brought to Jesus who says to him " your sins are forgiven," and only after the murmurings of the onlookers does he add " rise, take up your bed. . . ." Jesus sees the whole personality of the man, and cures first the sickness of the soul, and then the sickness of the body. The only people for whom Jesus had no excuses were the self-righteous. For these are they who with every encouragement from upbringing and environment are yet in a hopeless condition, inasmuch as they have fettered their own wills—they have attained the summit of their molehill, and deny the existence of a mountain. " Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Jesus was pitiful, his heart went out to those whose souls were diseased, very often through no fault of their own. He would assuredly favour the attitude which regards leniently the sins of so many sinners, and often seeks therapeutic methods to " cure " them of their errors and weaknesses.

I have spoken of sin as (sometimes) a disease, and this leads me to consider what we ordinarily call disease, that is, the pains and ills which afflict the body. Here we come to a problem, the problem of *suffering*, which is really more difficult of solution than the problem of moral evil. When God evolved a creature with " free will " He entered upon a gamble.

If He would have a being who would freely choose the good, He must put up with a being who could freely choose the bad. But surely, we say, He might have created a world which was free of *physical* suffering? How can He, if He be good, bear to see all the pain that is in our midst? Every decent man will shrink from making his brother man to suffer; how can he worship a God Who seemingly does not care?

Did Jesus face this problem and give us any light upon it? An obvious answer is that he endeavoured to eradicate physical suffering as much as he could. Our records tell us of great numbers of instances where he healed the sick and cured diseases. And yet, even if we were to admit the historical accuracy of all these healing stories, the result would be very far surely from showing us that he conducted anything like a real "campaign" against the ills this flesh is heir to. If a modern man of science discovers a remedy for some fell disease it is considered a moral obligation of the highest order that he shall bless the world with his knowledge. But did Jesus heal every sick person he came across, did he indeed render any real service to humanity at large by his wonderful therapeutic powers, did he leave any legacy of knowledge or method which would benefit future generations? These questions cannot be answered in the affirmative. And if that is so, what sort of conclusions can we draw?

It is clear that he regarded suffering as a necessary element in human life permitted by the Providence of God ; nor did he think of it as necessarily an evil. " Blessed are they that mourn," " blessed are they that have been persecuted " ; " whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also " ; " when ye fast, be not of a sad countenance "— these are a few sentences from the Sermon on the Mount. But indeed there is no need to multiply quotations. He was himself willing to suffer, and he called his followers to suffer with him. They must be willing to " drink of the cup," to " bear the cross." And it is not difficult to see that a certain amount of suffering is good, for the discipline of character and training of the will. But in saying that we have not got to the root of the difficulty. We have to add that there is much suffering which is degrading, embittering—when there is no honey in the carcase of the lion. And the suffering of little children ? And the suffering of animals ? It seems so uncalled for, wanton, cruel. I cannot find that Jesus helped us much to solve this problem in its whole range and implication.

But if Jesus did not solve suffering as a problem he defied it as a fact ; and there is yet to be shown anything finer than the man who will die for his friends and for his faith.

To bring this chapter to a close, I would summarise and say that

(*a*) Jesus would be on the side of the physician and all those who try to alleviate suffering and cure disease.

(*b*) He would not be on the side of those psychologists who say that we may take the line of least resistance and avoid pain by giving way to our instincts.

(*c*) He would sympathise with those who would stigmatise this as an adulterous generation. He would still think as he did, that in the mass men are rather hopeless. But with the knowledge of the intervening centuries he would no longer expect catastrophic happenings to remedy this.

(*d*) But, as then, he would be hopeful about every individual, and, in a sense, more hopeful, for he would no longer believe in demoniac possession.

(*e*) He would say that evil is no inconquerable thing, that a man has but to "come to himself," and that there is no "eternal sin" except when a man so identifies his will with evil as to blaspheme the very Spirit Himself of holiness.

CHAPTER X

THE ARTS

"God appeared: in perfect beauty"

People find it difficult to do without a religion of some sort. There would seem to be in man an instinct which seeks for its satisfaction in an ideal outside himself. Such things as lie within the ring fence of his own immediate experience do not fulfil the whole of his mind. His imagination is for ever at work; the young men see visions, the old men dream dreams. In his primitive state he takes a piece of wood and makes of it a rude image; thereupon he falls down to this as a god. There must be something he can adore—a something other than himself, for which his whole self yearns. The function of religion is to meet this aspiration.

And yet there are to-day many signs that religion, at any rate the organised expression of it, fails to do that which may be expected of it. There are numbers of people, and these not the least high-soul'd and finely-minded, who do not find in the various samples of religious representation, which are offered for their inspection or thrust into their hands, that thing which their nature craves for. And

so they must seek their satisfactions elsewhere. And where more fittingly than in that realm of beauty which is suggested by such words as art, music, literature? Here man is free to be a creator spirit. Here he is free from the fetters of dogma and tradition. Here he may ever move onward and upwards. The possibilities seem endless. How can an ardent nature pretend to be content with what a stereotyped Christianity has to offer? It seems to move within a circle of ideas which are threadbare and outworn. It is for ever ringing changes upon bells which are cracked and out of tune. The old story may still be sufficient for sentimental spinsters and unprogressive parsons; but (it may be urged) to tether oneself to this fact of the past—however sublime—is for ever to circumscribe one's activities—moral and mental, and to leave a universe unexplored.

I am concerned here with this question—Jesus had, we may admit, his limitations. No man touches the whole of life, life in all its aspects. Does this fact put him out of court as a guide and inspiration for those to whom the cult of beauty is a thing at least as sacred as the Ten Commandments, and the creation of beautiful things considerably more worshipful than attendance at services somewhat optimistically called "divine." Would Jesus just tolerate either music or art or poetry as a toy for the moment, or would he be impressed with them as a joy for ever?

In some respects the *milieu* in which Jesus lived was calculated to crush artistic sensibility. A people who could believe that " thou shalt not make any graven image " was a divine command, whose whole (sacred) literature contains hardly any references to architecture, sculpture, painting—a people such as that is not likely to produce a Praxiteles. For music they had a better liking—though it is not likely that the modern ear would be entranced with their melodies. But if we are to seek for the expression of artistic sensibility amongst these people we must go to their *literature*. No reader of the English Authorised Version of the Old Testament will need elaborate proof of this. The range of subjects may be limited ; a poet might say that the only extended piece of writing where the writer lets his imagination " go " is the Song of Songs. But there is often, in the Psalms, in portions of the prophets, a fineness of imagery and a stateliness of diction which shows high literary instinct. And some of the old stories (who can forget Ruth ?) are fit, both in idea, incident and expression to take their place amongst the world's best.

Thus, if we are to find anything of the artist in the mind of Jesus we shall come to it by a study of his " words," that is in the literary as distinguished from those other forms of art by which a man may express himself.

There was indeed an occasion when he might have been led to reveal his thought on one

other of these forms of artistic invention and construction—architecture. For he once overheard some of his friends expatiating on the richly ornamental buildings of the great Temple at Jerusalem, its splendid stones and many votive gifts. His only remark was " as for what you see, the days are coming when not one stone will be left upon another. . . ." It is as though you should be showing someone over Westminster Abbey, and his first comment should be " unless you do something to stop war, this place will soon be shattered by bombs." It would be a saying you might quote afterwards, but it would not at the time encourage you to be expansive on the beauties and treasures of the Abbey. Jesus seems to have been little touched by the wonder of man's skill in building or in the representative arts, pictorial and plastic. If he had lived in Athens, we might have had a very different tale to tell.

We read that he and his friends once " sang a hymn " together. But if we ask " had he a good voice ? " " had he an ear for music ? " " did he sing in tune ? " we put questions that not only are unanswerable, but seem inapt, incongruent ; we do not think of him as a singer. The references to music in the story of his life are of the slightest. He told of the children in the market-place who piped for their fellows to dance ; and he told of the elder brother of the " prodigal " coming near to his home and hearing " music and dancing "—and that is about all.

But when we come to the medium of language I think it is not difficult to discern a mind which was naturally and vividly artistic and loved things beautiful. No one will care to deny that he was a born story-teller. The fact that Jesus spoke so much in parables seems to the editor of the first Gospel to require the explanation that it was a fulfilment of prophecy. But surely the simplest and truest thing to say is that Jesus told stories because he could not help it! Whenever he wanted to bring home some idea a pictorial illustration at once leaped into his mind. He taught not in the abstractions of a philosopher, but with the living images of the artist.

When he would justify his conduct in welcoming " sinners " and wished to show that this is just what God would do, straightway he has his story about the lost sheep for the men, and the lost coin for the women: and he follows it with the incomparable tale of the Prodigal Son. He does not argue; he gives illustrations which are memorable in themselves, and in themselves are unanswerable arguments. He desired to urge people to persevere in prayer; at one time he told of a man who is roused up in the middle of the night by a persistent friend, at another of a widow woman who finally got justice from a reluctant judge because she went on pestering him. He would show the futility of spending life in an effort to amass riches, and he was not content to say " you will have to

leave it all behind you when you die." He must put it into the form of a story leading to the climax "God said to him 'thou fool'!" You picture—on the human side, all the man's activities and planning—and on the Divine side, the quiet waiting and the one decisive sentence at the moment God pleases. There is no need to press this point with further allusions. In a recent book we are given a collection of the "Great Short Stories of the World," and inevitably one of the parables of Jesus finds a place there.*

But apart from the set stories, there are abundant facts to show that Jesus had the imaginative mind of the creative artist in words. How often did he use simile and analogy! He called men to work with him—"you shall be fishers of men." He would justify them in not fasting—"can friends at a wedding fast while the bridegroom is with them?" He would show how the spirit of his new thought cannot be bound by the conventions of the old—"no one stitches a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment," and "no one pours fresh wine into old wine-skins." He would emphasise how difficult it is for rich men to be religious—"it is easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle." He wanted his friends to realise their responsibilities—they are "salt," they are

* The editors say, "If Jesus spoke his parables exactly as they are written, he must be accounted one of the world's greatest artists."

" light," they are like " a tower on the top of a hill which cannot be hidden." He urged them to be benevolent, and it will follow that there will be poured " into your lap measure pressed down, shaken together and running over." They must not, in criticising others, forget their own faults—" why note the splinter in your brother's eye and fail to see the plank in your own eye ? " They were to have faith even if it be only " the size of a grain of mustard seed."

Of his enemies, Jesus said " let them alone ; they are blind guides of the blind, and if one blind man leads another, both of them will fall into a pit." To describe their obtuseness he said they filtered away the gnat and swallowed the camel. How vivid and picturesque all this is ! We have alluded before to his representation of Satan falling down from heaven like a flash of lightning ; and we again have this imagery : " like lightning that flashed from one side of the sky to the other "—when he speaks of the sudden coming of the " Son of Man." There is the grim image, whatever its precise significance, " where the dead body is lying, there the vultures will gather." Of a like nature are the words of his scathing apostrophe of the scribes : " you brood of vipers ! " But how different is this : " how often would I fain have gathered your children as a fowl gathers her brood under her wings." And again : " what did you go out into the desert to see—a reed

swayed by the wind ? " Or once more—did the village carpenter remember the yokes he had made for the oxen when he said " my yoke is easy " ?

I ask you next to notice, not the imagery Jesus used, but the language he employed. He had power in a wonderful degree of being able to put his thought in terse, epigrammatic phraseology. I will give a few of these memorable sayings : the fact that they are very familiar must not blunt the edge of our sensibility.

" The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath."

" Where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

" What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul ? "

" He that is not against us is for us."

" Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

" Do unto others as you would they should do unto you."

Then there are other passages which might be described as rhetorical. The style is now declamatory rather than epigrammatic ; the effect is obtained not by economy, but by abundance of words—phrase piled on phrase to make the impression. Here are three instances taken almost at random :—

(i) " Resist] not evil
But whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek
Turn to him the other also.
And if any man would go to law with thee for thy coat,
Let him take thy cloke also.

And whoever shall compel thee to go one mile,
Go with him twain."

(ii) " The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the Judgment with this generation and shall condemn it :
For they repented at the preaching of Jonah,
And behold more than Jonah is here !
The Queen of the South shall rise up in the Judgment with this generation and shall condemn it.
For she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon :
And] behold more than Solomon is here ! "

(iii) " He therefore that sweareth by the altar,
Sweareth by it and by all things thereon.
And he that sweareth by the Temple,
Sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein,
And he that sweareth by Heaven,
Sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon."

In the book of Psalms you get the Hebrew poetry which is most familiar to English readers. This poetry has no rhyme or metre, but is characterised by a certain rhythm, and a rhythmical balance of clauses. It is possible to show this in translation, and therefore the poetical nature of it can be to some extent appreciated by those unfamiliar with the original language. The lines of a piece of Hebrew poetry show what is know as parallelism, and this parallelism is exhibited in a great variety of forms. It is not difficult to show that Jesus often spoke * in this fashion, with all the

* Assuming that, in the instances given, we have more or less his *ipsissima verba*.

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rhythm of Hebrew poetry. Let me illustrate the point with a few examples.

In the first we have a couplet where the thought of the first line is repeated in other terminology in the second—what is known as synonymous parallelism.

> " Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister,
> And whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all."

Another form of this parallelism is a couplet where the thought of the first line is confirmed not by a repetition but by the affirmative of its antithesis in the second.

> " Unto everyone that hath shall be given,
> But from him that hath not even that which he hath shall be taken from him."

Yet another form is seen when the second line completes the first by a kind of logical continuation of its thought. Jesus once quoted such a couplet from a Psalm :—

> " The stone which the builders rejected,
> The same was made the head of the corner."

And he converted this into a quatrain by adding two (similar) lines of his own :—

> " Everyone that falleth on that stone shall be broken in pieces,
> But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust."

I will add but one more example. In this you have a quatrain where the first line is parallel to the third, and the second to the fourth, and where the two couplets are parallel each to the other :—

> " To whomsoever much is given,
> Of him shall much be required.
> And to whom they commit much,
> Of him will they ask the more."

The careful reader can hardly fail to be impressed by this phenomenon in the speech of Jesus—its tendency to take rhythmical, *i.e.*, definitely literary form. It may occur in hortatory injunctions :—

> " Ask and it shall be given you,
> Seek and ye shall find,
> Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

It may happen in the course of a story :—

> " This my son was dead—and is alive again,
> He was lost—and is found."

And you meet it even in the spontaneous terminology of conversation :—

> " Thou gavest me no water for my feet,
> But she hath wetted my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.
> Thou gavest me no kiss,
> But she since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.
> My head with oil thou didst not anoint,
> But she hath anointed my feet with ointment."

The mind of Jesus, we may then say, was imaginative ; it was filled with poetical imagery, it could and did (within the limitations I have mentioned) appreciate beauty—beauty of idea and beauty of expression. It was the reverse of all that is prosy, dictatorial or dogmatic. It expressed itself most naturally in symbol, simile, analogy ; it was the mind of the literary artist—the poet.

If my reader follows me in this, I will ask him in the remaining pages of this chapter to come to the scene in that upper room where Jesus held a last supper with his friends.* During the meal he took a loaf and, after some words of blessing, broke it into fragments and distributed it amongst those present. As he did so he pronounced the words " Take, this is my body." He then took a cup of wine and, again after words of blessing or thanksgiving, passed it round, so that all drank of it, while he said " This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many."

We have to try to put ourselves in the place of those who witnessed these acts and first heard these words. They saw their leader with a loaf in his hand, and of it he said " this is my body." Could they have thought for a moment that he meant them to take these words literally ? The " body " and the " bread " were there

* It may be that we shall never be quite sure what happened and what was said on this occasion. The varying accounts differ in detail. Elaborate discussion would be out of place here. Suffice it to say that in what is given above I follow the second Gospel.

before them, two distinct, unconfused things; and as the portions of the latter were consumed the former remained before their eyes. If Jesus' teaching and terminology had always been perfectly prosaic and matter of fact, they might well have been bewildered by what he now said. But if they had become used to his methods of parable, metaphor, simile; if their minds had become in some measure attuned to the artistry and poetry of his—then will they have thought his present words and action as touchingly symbolical.

But perhaps he himself meant—however his hearers understood the matter—to identify in some mysterious way the "bread" and the "body"? "This is" can, it may be argued, only mean one thing—identification. But is that so? We may take one of Jesus' parables and see clearly from it that "is" does not necessarily signify identicalness. In the story of the tares, Jesus had said "the field is the world"; and again, "the enemy is the devil." It would be crass indeed to equate these things and to say that the copula implies synonymity. It we have been at all on right lines in this chapter in what we seem to have discerned of the method and mind of Jesus, then we may in justice think that his language at this last supper was symbolical, with a "sunset touch" of poetry.

He is to leave his friends. Death awaits him. This is the last time they will be together. A

sublime mystic once wrote "Jesus acted from impulse, not from rules." He knows what is before him in the next few hours—the suffering, the torture of the cross. But this offering of himself is voluntary—he is not being dragged to it reluctantly. His self-sacrifice is, in the loving purpose of his Father, to bring blessing to his brethren. "Greater love hath no man than this. . . ." On an impulse, shall we say, and in a stress of deep emotion, he shows by a symbolical act how utterly of his own choice is this sacrifice? "Take—this is my body. Drink—this is my blood." I give myself for you, to you. As I give this bread, this wine—so I give my body, my blood. I reserve nothing—take—this is yours."

One who could thus say "good-bye" to his friends in words and actions so simple and yet so full of beauty should still be able to make his appeal.

I picture him as one who had the capacity for an almost unbounded interest in life. The world—Nature—mankind—impinged upon an imagination that was vigorous, vital, creative. "Dull" he never was. He would be the last to wish to confine men's interests within a narrow ring fence. He had indeed his sense of values, and things spiritual and religious came first. But these things did not mean credal formulæ, or stereotyped forms of worship, or conventional conduct. He was vivid, he was alive, his eyes were open to loveliness.

And yet, in the prime of his manhood, in the midway of his career, with body vigorous and intellect in the full splendour of its power,* he was willing to lay aside all, to be treated with contempt and ignominy, to suffer racking pain, and to die. This he did that the world might be the better for it. And nineteen centuries of Christian history have shown that he did not do it in vain. Untold millions have been thankful to Jesus.

The Psalmist speaks of " bread which strengtheneth man's heart," and of " wine that maketh glad the heart of man." Jesus has given these words a new significance. By his act at the Last Supper he has consecrated these things. As we repeat it we do not perform a magical ceremony —we recite—we linger over a great poem. The Sacrament is a sonnet in form, a lyric in music, an epic in meaning. It symbolises a sublime fact, it recalls the last deed amongst his friends of the most inspiring man who ever lived, and it for ever tells that he only is truly noble—however great his accomplishments and gifts—who is willing to give rather than to get, to be minister rather than *magister*.

We may go to the altar in the same mood, and with something of the same expectations, as we may gaze on a Raphael masterpiece or

* His intellectual mastery is well seen in the account of the last two or three days in the Temple. He dominates everyone. He is confronted by the *intelligentsia* of his nation, and he confounds them all.

listen to a symphony of Beethoven—to be exalted, to be inspired.

But some may ask: "Is that all—is the Sacrament no more than this?" I would not say so. But I will point out these two things:—

(*a*) The Sacrament comes down to us with a long history; and to say that it may not and should not be more to us than it was to those in the upper chamber is to assert more than I should care dogmatically to do.

(*b*) We have been chiefly concerned here in showing Jesus as a poet-soul; and I believe that this aspect of his mind must not be neglected when considering "the Lord's Supper." To go beyond these limits would be to enlarge the scope of our treatment indefinitely.

CHAPTER XI

THE SAINTS

"The Lord ordereth a good man's going."

WHAT is religion? Jesus (as we have noticed before), once drew attention to the fact that no one pours fresh wine into old wine-skins, for if he did the skins would burst. Men are apt to think that religion is the wine-skin, whereas it is really the wine. When it is real it is something which is ever fresh and new, refusing to be checked or restrained by antique formulæ or conventional practices. Religion for a Christian will be neither more nor less than that thing or system of things which will enable him to be like the founder of Christianity. Few would care to deny that Jesus was the best man that ever lived, even if they would not care to make further affirmations about him. So far as the formation of character and the development of the inner life is concerned, most people would be willing to confess that the *Imitatio Christi* more than sufficed to fulfil their aspirations.

Now Jesus himself provided new wine, and the old wine-skins did not suffice. One of the institutions most cherished by his countrymen was that of the Sabbath. Here was a very old wine-skin. "Is it right," said Jesus, "to help

or to hurt on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" Here is the new wine. Once, when Jesus' friends were hungry as they walked through a field of standing corn, and they started plucking the ripened ears. Certain strait-laced onlookers are shocked that this should be done on a Sabbath Day. But Jesus told them that they had not even had the sense to understand their own sacred writings; for in one place there God is represented as saying "I care for mercy, not for sacrifice." Acts of kindness, that is to say, are more important than religious ordinances.

This particular quotation seems to have been rather a favourite one with Jesus. We find him using it again when certain people objected to his sitting at table with the social outcasts. And then its application is, that cordial sympathy is better than ceremonial cleanliness. To return to our point. "The Sabbath," said Jesus, in memorable phrase, "was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." A religious observance is to be judged by its effects. The thing is a servant, not a master. To translate this into modern terminology. A man (for instance), best uses Sunday who so orders it that it most fully benefits him—the whole "him," body, mind and spirit.* The problem "how to keep Sunday" is thus a personal one.

* To spend the whole day in Church would be (perhaps) as much to miss an opportunity as to spend the whole day on the golf links.

It will have a hundred different and equally legitimate solutions.

This kind of teaching was " new wine " to the contemporaries of Jesus, and it is, for many, new wine still. The point I am making here is this—that, for Jesus, the development of the personality and character was all-important. The outward observances of religion are of value only in so far as they minister to, or are the expression of that. Now, if we look at Jesus we see that he had, in this last period of his life, a *finished* character. I do not argue about his " sinlessness " or his " perfection." But in the record of the period of his public work it seems impossible to discern any *growth* of character. He is consistently the same all the way through.

And one of his most remarkable characteristics was this—his calmness or imperturbability. In the Sower story he told of those in whom the " word " would be choked because their lives would be filled with the " cares of the world," and such like things. He gently rebuked Martha because she was distracted by her domestic duties. He brought peace to a man whose mind was mad because it seemed to him to be full of disturbing devils—" my name is Legion." He urged people not to worry about such things as food, drink, clothing. He told his followers that if they were brought up before the justices, they were not to be anxious beforehand what they should speak—

the Holy Spirit would speak through them. Other people are often very upsetting and annoying, yet Jesus said "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Now all this can only be done by a man who is calm and has a pretty good hold of himself.

But Jesus practised what he preached. He himself prayed for those that despitefully used him: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He was always * quiet and unperturbed. Whatever we may think of the historical value of such a story as that which relates the stilling of a tempest, at any rate we may be allowed to see in it a record of the impression Jesus had left, that, even in the most terrifying circumstances, he was quite calm and unruffled. Amid all the excitement of those last days in Jerusalem he could sit down quietly in a corner of the Temple and watch the people putting their money into the Treasury; and he noticed particularly that poor widow—up to the end he reaped the "harvest of a quiet eye."

I should like to draw special attention to one remarkable example of the quietude of his mind at that time. He wished to have a last Supper with his friends; and he desired to have it undisturbed. Therefore the place where it should be held must not be known to

* The few instances which might be adduced to the contrary show only his real humanity, and are easily explained and justified.

his enemies. He set out therefore to make arrangements, and he did so entirely by himself, without telling even those who were most intimate with him, so that there should be no chance of the secret leaking out. He went to a man in the city whom he knew, and who, he thought, would be able to provide the necessary accommodation. He was shown to the top of the house, where he found just what he wanted —a large room, furnished with couches. It would be necessary, when the day came, to send some of his friends to make all preparations. But Jesus did not want to give them an address. How, then, would they find the house? This was the plan hit upon. The owner of the house was to send his manservant, who would wait about by the city gate, bearing a pitcher of water on his shoulder. Thus he would be noticeable, for it was almost always women who were the pitcher bearers. Jesus would instruct his friends to follow this man and go into the house he entered.*

There is little need to follow the story of those last scenes. For a moment he was deeply agitated in the garden. But from the time of the arrest, when he told one of his more pugnacious followers to put up again his sword into its scabbard, until the end, he was royal in his dignity, simple and serene.†

* I do not think this little imaginative sketch goes beyond what the facts of our records warrant.

† Alas, that I cannot use the expression "Serene Highness," yet it would be so apt.

But such tranquillity of mind does not come unsought. It is won by the will through the discipline of troubled experience. Jesus has himself told us that he knew what it was to be " tempted of the devil." The people of his native place were astonished at the kind of man he was revealing himself to be, and they asked " where did he get all this ? " The Jesus that we know is the Jesus of a long education. There is no more remarkable fact concerning his life than the fact that we know so little about it. All but a small fraction of it is and will for ever remain unrecorded and unsung. But can we doubt that for him (his personal life) that long period of preparation was more important than the short time of ministry ? In the quietude of his home he grew and developed. There he learned and practised discipline—the tutoring of his life to a great purpose.

If we may conjecture that he did not enter upon his public work until he was entirely sure of himself, then we get an explanation of his long silence. He said once " no one is fit for the Kingdom of God who puts his hand to the plough and then looks behind him." Such sayings gain immensely in force if they may be thought of as formulated from personal experience. He knew the effort required to make inflexible decisions. " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." How did he know that ? The vision of God was a reality to him, but in his own spiritual growth he had

become convinced that only the soul which could bear God's scrutiny in every corner of it would itself be able to see God. He knew that out of the heart of man come the things that defile, and that no mere outward cleansings are of any avail.

Inward mastery is the source of all personal power. And Jesus knew the efforts that must be made to attain this. "If your hand is a hindrance to you, cut it off . . . if your foot is a hindrance to you, cut it off . . . if your eye is a hindrance to you, tear it out." These expressions have a fierceness about them which is more readily appreciated if we admit that Jesus knew well the anguish that preludes attainment. A fragmentary saying may be taken in this connection—"everyone shall be salted with fire." There must be a destroying (fire) if there is to be a preserving (salt). This is akin to the profound aphorism, repeated more than once, "whoever seeks to keep safe (for himself) his own life shall lose it, and whoever loses it will (really) be giving it life." Jesus assuredly spoke here of something that he knew; it is no mere copy-book maxim, it has been wrung out of him by his own experience. He is our supreme expert in the spiritual domain; we may take it from him that it is true. It is for ever the fact that if you are out for self-seeking, you are heading for self-destruction; whereas if you are practising self-denial you are ensuring self-preservation. To

" live " as did the Prodigal Son is eventually to " be in want."

A key, then, to the understanding of the power of Jesus is to be found in his self-conquest. His enemies once accused him of being in league with Satan. Jesus showed how ridiculous an accusation like this was, for his whole effort was bent upon casting out Satan. Then he goes on with this simile : Satan is " the strong man," and " no one can enter into the house of the strong man and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man." Had not Jesus had his struggle with the strong man, and had he not now bound him hand and foot, so that he was powerless ? Jesus was the calm, unfearful man we know because he had won his victory and no further danger was a terror to him. We do him great disservice if we refuse to recognise that he " did his bit " in the great war that mankind is always waging—the battle that each man has in his own soul. " Seek peace and ensue it " ; he had sought it, as we all do, and he had found it, as many of us have not yet done. We shall only find it, as he did, by vigorous and fearless battle, again and again renewed.

But self-dominance must be made consistent with humility. " Blessed are the poor in spirit. . . . Blessed are the meek." We are never to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We are to take for our example rather the Publican, who said " God be merciful to

me a sinner," than the Pharisee, who thanked God he was not as other men are. Jesus said of himself " I am meek and lowly in heart." This was said in a context which robs it of all taint of self-praise. He would have us see that arrogance and all self-satisfaction are despicable. Humility is a virtue only in the way that common sense is a virtue. It means a facing of facts and an understanding of things as they are. Those only can be well pleased with themselves who have low standards of satisfaction. The advantage of having a God is that He keeps you in your place. If you are your own god you will never add one cubit to your stature. But the Father-God of Jesus is One who, while welcoming your smallest effort, is never satisfied with you as you are, for He knows what you might be. And those who study Jesus will find that he was a perfect " Son," whom to copy is at once to be humiliated to the dust and stimulated to ever-renewed effort.

* * * * *

Two strong instincts contend for supremacy in the life of man. One is the desire for company, the other is the desire for loneliness. We are told that man is a social animal ; it is also true that he is a secret animal. I am not saying that the instinct for solitude is strongly developed in the great mass of mankind. But in those who have an inner life which is rich in experience, strenuous in effort, for ever chasing the elusive

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ideal, there are times when the longing for loneliness becomes an anguish, almost an agony if it be not satisfied. And yet many who feel this would not really consent to call it loneliness —for they are never less alone than when they are by themselves. They have a world, their world ; they retire to it, and they are refreshed in a green pasture and beside the waters of comfort.

Jesus felt this. We remember how the spirit " drove " him into the wilderness after his baptism ; and again and again amidst the business and anxiety of his public work the craving for quietude came to him. Thus we read of him such things as this : " in the early morning, long before daylight, he got up and went away out to a lonely spot." And in another place, " large crowds gathered . . . but he was in retirement in lonely places." On (at least) one occasion he spent a whole wakeful night by himself up in the hills. If he could not be quite alone he would say to his chosen ones, " come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." On the last night, when he and his friends reached Gethsemane, he bade them sit and wait while he penetrated the garden. Three only did he take with him further. But after walking a few paces with these he felt that even their company was too much. He asked them to stay, while he went forward a little to be quite by himself.

I have said that the Jesus of the ministry

appears a " finished " character. But this does not imply that he was impassive, no longer subject to temptation, no more in need of God's help. When he sought solitude it was not just in order to escape company, rather was it to find company. He would be alone with his Father and, in the immediacy of undisturbed communion, find refreshment and power. This retirement to the inner sanctuary is called by those who wrote his life, " praying." What prayer meant to him we can but dimly guess.

Sometimes he would be praying when his friends were close by. They would watch him and would wonder " what did he say, what words did he use ? " And it happened one day that " he was praying in a certain place, and when he stopped one of his disciples said to him ' Lord, teach us to pray ' . . ." In response to this appeal Jesus taught them those few, familiar lines which we know as " the Lord's Prayer." Nothing is more remarkable about it than the fact that there is so little of it. It is as though its author should say, " I do not wish you to think of prayer as a formality, a mere repeating of a set form of words. Here is a brief suggestion. You may take it as a model for your oratory but do not make it a precedent for formalism." He inveighed against those who offered " long, unreal prayers," and he urged his friends not to " use vain repetitions," or be as the people who

" think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." There must be nothing that shall numb our naturalness, or congeal the spontaneous expression of our sincere desires.

But, it may be said, we willingly admit that Jesus was a man of prayer and that he encouraged his followers to pray, but is there any sign that he had faced the difficulties which beset the whole subject? It may quite plausibly be argued that the more a man thinks the less will he be inclined to pray. The simple-minded person may have no hesitation in asking God to do all sorts of things. If God made and sustains the whole universe, if He is all-powerful, it seems obvious that He can be requested to alter the weather or heal a sick person. And yet if, besides this, He is all-wise, if with His power He is carrying out a plan, how shall we deflect Him from His purpose? To ask Him to alter things in the physical universe is to tell Him that His plan is working badly, that it calls for constant and considerable alteration and adjustment. If we really imagine that He is open to suggestions for improvements in the ordering of this universe, why do we not ask Him to make efforts really worthy of His omnipotence? Shall we petition Him (for example) to provide such treatment for the bowels of the earth that there may no more be earthquakes or volcanic eruptions?

There will be many who, influenced by such considerations as that, are inclined to limit the

scope of their prayers to things spiritual. They hesitate to make requests about the weather, but they do not feel the same qualms in asking for forgiveness of their sins, or for a strengthening of their moral fibre, or for gifts of the spirit, " love, joy, peace . . ." And not only do they feel no intellectual difficulty in such manner of prayer, but (they will say) they have proved by their experience that prayer of this sort is " answered." They have felt after so praying a moral uplift, a spiritual stimulus. It has not been a barren exercise ; they have been aware of a Presence and a response. The spiritual effort has brought a spiritual result. Let us become pragmatists for the moment and agree that if this thus " works," then it is justified. The effort of prayer may be indeed a condition of high spirituality. If it be God's plan that this shall be so, then in thus praying to Him we are not altering His purposes, but fulfilling them.

Yet (as has been argued), this seems to rule out one function of prayer which by many (and those not the least noble-hearted) will be regarded as the highest. If the spiritual effort is needed for the spiritual result, it seems clear that each one must pray for himself alone. Others must make their own effort. All intercessory prayer seems thus to be illegitimate. This is a disconcerting conclusion. Is it a necessary one ? Let us admit that the other person's effort is required ;

without that effort he cannot have his reward. And yet does that rule out the possibility of any Divine action, though it is I who have prayed for it, and not my brother ?

It seems to me that if we look to the analogy of our own relationships with each other the answer is clear. Let there be three persons, A, B and C. A is anxious to help B, to warn him (it may be) of the danger he is in by his present course of life. But he feels he is not the man to do it. And so he asks the tactful C to undertake the mission. The latter does so, and with good results. But these results are good only because C was responsive and willing to make his effort. In a similar way, may I not ask God to help my friend ? God will not coerce a man's free will ; but neither did C in our analogy above. Yet I cannot see why He should be less influential than our fellow man or less willing to exercise His influence. Consider this saying of Jesus, " Simon, Simon, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat, but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not : and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren." Jesus expects that Peter will be an influence with his brothers, and he has no difficulty in believing that in like manner God will be an influence with Peter.

It sounds simple. But then Jesus, for all his profundity, was simple. He loved children, and told us we were to be like them. He taught that

God is just " our Father," and that immediate personal relation with him was both easy and natural. We are not to worry—God loves us and has numbered the very hairs of our heads. It is said that when Jesus hung upon the cross his enemies taunted him thus : " He trusted in God : let him deliver him now. . . ." And Jesus is for all time, and without any peradventure or qualification, pre-eminently the " man who trusted in God." The whole story that we have of him shows this. If there is one seeming exception it does but add impressiveness to the whole of the other testimony. The taunt we have mentioned above seems to have rankled in the mind of Jesus. It went home. He had indeed trusted utterly—and now ? So at last he spake with his tongue, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " And then the fundamental faith returned, and he gave up his life with the loud cry, " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Simplicity and sincerity—these two things must be conspicuous in the lives of all who would be imitators of Jesus. The hypocrite and self-righteous were alone those he could not tolerate—the people who would justify themselves before men, but (as he said) God knew their hearts. It is no doubt a high standard—the very highest—Jesus sets before us. Did he not say " be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect " ? But we are God's little ones—we may trust our Father. He would like

us to climb high—but He knows that most of us can as yet hardly walk. His eye is upon us and His helping hand is ever ready.

At least, that is what Jesus thought.

CHAPTER XII

THE HEAVENLIES

"With long life will I satisfy him."

EVERYBODY wants to be happy, and all decent people want other people to be happy. But, Lord help us, what a mess we make of it all! We would like this world to be a place fit for heroes to live in, and we make of it such a place as calls for their utmost heroism. We turn the happy valley into a vale of tears. It is largely our doing. And yet I would go on to say, it is not wholly our doing. The foolishness of men brings woe upon woe; but poor man is not altogether master in his own house. Circumstances of life over which he has very little or even no control must be taken into account. It is not strictly true that he may make what he will of the world, or find it feasible to

"build Jerusalem
"In England's green and pleasant land."

He could certainly fashion it into a far happier place than it is; but he will always have to look for his real Heaven elsewhere.

Now, of the many things which tend to mar human happiness these are two. First, the

restrictions and limitations which the conditions of life here impose upon each one of us. We desire to fulfil ourselves in so many ways, and we are lucky if we can really fulfil ourselves in one. You think you may by an effort keep yourself out of a groove, but you probably do not do much more than look over the edge of it and realise that it is a groove. That is indeed something ; and yet it merely augments your dissatisfaction. The possibilities of education are restricted, the chances of developing latent talent are limited, ideals have either to be cut into manageable lengths or relegated to the domain of dreams. And Father Time ? He may be old, but his wing never loses its power, and he flies all too swiftly. And then—be it soon, or be it late—he uses his scythe upon each of us, and we are cut down. That is our other fact—Death. And how can there be complete *abandon* of happiness for any of us if always in our path stands that grim spectre ?

Jesus knew, and none better, the limitations of life ; and Jesus faced—it did not come upon him unawares—this thing that we call death. He knew, as all men know, that death awaited him. But he had an anticipation of it considerably more vivid than have most people. When he had entered upon his public work it soon became evident that he had raised up enemies on every side, and that dangers—daily more menacing—lurked in his path. He had taken a line so fundamentally opposed to the religious

leaders of the nation that it became inevitable they should withstand him fiercely. And as he did not flinch or compromise their opposition became ever more settled and their evil purpose more clearly defined. Jesus came to see that nothing would content them but his destruction. There is a scene, bearing every mark of verisimilitude, which tells us when he first " began " to tell his friends of his forebodings, of what he felt sure was coming to him. It is in the record which tradition says is based on the recollections of Peter, and we can readily understand why the latter should never have forgotten the incident. Jesus, we read, had just spoken of his anticipations of great suffering and death. Peter was shocked, and ventured even to reprove him for saying such things. But Jesus, who could be pretty plain-spoken when he liked, said " Get behind me, you Satan ! Your thoughts are not God's thoughts, but men's." This was a barbed shaft that Peter could not tear from his memory.

Yet this expectation of a near and violent death does not seem to have filled Jesus with terror. I do not forget the agony in the garden ; I am certainly not trying to picture him as the world's greatest Stoic. He could feel, and was not ashamed of showing his feelings. But normally the thought of death was one he could entertain without fear. But a few days before the end he was at table in a house at Bethany. A woman anointed him with precious perfume.

Some of those present were annoyed at what they deemed to be waste. But Jesus said, "She has done a beautiful thing . . . she has perfumed my body in preparation for my burial." One who could so speak was not thinking of death as a dread thing. He did indeed tell of a cup to be drained, and a baptism to be undergone; and he may have said (as reported in one place): "how I am distressed till it is all over." But the allusions will be rather to the sufferings anticipated than to death itself, the mere ending of the bodily life. There is indeed a pathos of death, but it is in the sadness of those who are left behind, rather than in the fate of him who has gone. Jesus sympathised with that: "when the bridegroom is taken away . . ."

We do not, then, gather the impression that Jesus was afraid to die, nor certainly do we discern that he tried to avoid death. Rather did he walk quite calmly into the very jaws of it. Why was it that he was thus content to give up his life in the very prime of his manhood? There are doubtless many answers to this question. The one I am concerned to stress here is this. Jesus could face death as an episode neither to be dreaded nor avoided, because he was convinced that death was but a prelude to such tremendous happenings afterwards—happenings of the greatest import both for himself and for the world.

It seems impossible to doubt that he was

convinced he should return again to this earth. If you should distrust the historical accuracy of any and all the sayings in which he is recorded to have predicted his return you would find it difficult to account for the fact that an expectation of such a return was deeply embedded in the thoughts of his followers almost from the first. They were convinced he was coming again, and that he was coming very soon. It is unthinkable that an anticipation so deeply rooted could have arisen if Jesus himself had been entirely silent upon the subject. Our authorities attribute the notion to him, and no other explanation is plausible. We should look at the narratives without prejudice, and be willing to admit that Jesus had, with what justification I do not here enquire, made up his mind that he was, after death, to reappear in the midst of this life, and that certain events of vast moment would follow.

It is recorded that in the last few days he told more than one story of which the moral was "watch." There is the man who goes abroad, and puts his servants in charge of the house, each with his work to do, and gives orders to the porter to keep watch. There is the well-known story of the Ten Virgins—five of whom were wise and five foolish—with its conclusion that those indeed are foolish who are not prepared for the return of the bridegroom. If Jesus related such stories as these, and they have his "touch," then we may believe that,

as recorded, he not infrequently repeated this admonition to watch. He did wish to create in the minds of his hearers the impression that they were to be a people on the look out, for his death would not be a be-all and end-all, but only a condition precedent to a great and wonderful re-appearance. If we may trust the report, he was so certain of all this that he did not hesitate to proclaim it confidently and fearlessly before his judges, when prudence would have suggested silence.

The point I am going to suggest next is this. It is often said that after Jesus' death his followers were utterly dejected, disappointed, driven to despair. The worst had happened and there seemed no hope. The evidence for this is almost non-existent. I think a different view is at any rate worth consideration. That these men and women may have hoped almost to the last that he would come to his own without being killed is most likely. One account does indeed relate that a story Jesus told, that of the pounds, was told on the way to Jerusalem in order if possible to remove this apprehension. Judas may quite well have had as his motive in betraying Jesus the desire to force him into strong action and thus defeat the designs of his enemies.* But then Jesus did what he always said he would do, he suffered himself to be killed. The cross must

* As a result his action brought about the one thing all the friends of Jesus wished to fend off. This drove Judas to despair and suicide.

indeed at first have seemed an awful tragedy. His friends would have been inhuman if they had not been struck to the heart by the horror of it.

But must we assume that they were filled with blank despair? Are we to think that the teachings and warnings of Jesus had fallen on stone-deaf ears and been utterly unheeded? Those followers of his did not disperse after his death. They were still to be found in Jerusalem. They may, they must, indeed, have felt utterly bewildered at first. But did they not also, almost at once, begin to ponder the matter? I picture them as eagerly debating one with another that Friday night, on the Sabbath which followed, trying to understand the significance of it all. "He is dead—but did he not say he would die? Did he not say he was coming again? He told us he did not know of the day or hour. But he enjoined us to watch. He has gone to the 'far country' But he has left us his 'business' to do. What is our duty?"

These would be the first beginnings of discussion. And then the next day there came strange news. Very early in the morning some women said they had seen him. Later in the day Peter gave similar testimony. And there were others who reported likewise. It was all utterly unexpected,* almost incredible. Jesus was alive.

* I am assuming that Jesus did not foretell that he would "rise again the third day." There is reason to suppose that early tradition, in the light of events, "completed" the predictions of Jesus so that they should include the Resurrection.

I do not propose to embark upon an elaborate discussion of the resurrection narratives. They present many difficulties. In particular, the modern mind finds it hard to believe in the reanimation of the dead body. That is not at all what we expect for ourselves. Whatever manner of resurrection we consider may be in store for us, we certainly do not think it will mean a resuscitation of the material particles of that body which is laid in the grave. And if the gospel narratives are true, then the resurrection of Jesus was something unique. It does not make a precedent, but rather forms an exception.

Be that as it may, I am concerned here only with this point. Something certainly happened and something unexpected. The followers of Jesus became rapidly convinced, by evidence which seemed to them conclusive, that their friend and master was not holden by death. They had, as they conceived, "seen" him. He had demonstrated the reality of his presence in such ways as left them no doubt. And their conviction was so vivid and profound that they were eager to proclaim it as a very central thesis of their gospel to the whole world, however hostile. They were willing in that proclamation of it to suffer and even to die. To die? And why not? What now was death? This that had happened to their friend was a laughing to scorn of death and all its terrors.

It will not be irrelevant here to make allusion to a subject which has its fascination for many in the present day—what is commonly known as spiritualism. A central tenet of spiritualism is, I take it, the possibility that departed spirits may make their presence known by tokens, not to be gainsaid, to us who are living within the conditions of this life on earth. And the spiritualist contends not only for the possibility but for the actuality of this; he produces evidence of communication with disembodied spirits. Now the Christian story tells us that one who was dead is alive again, and gave evidence of his living presence by "many infallible proofs." Christianity is thus based on spiritualism. And it will be highly inconsistent for any Christian to put any ban or bar on the efforts of those who are endeavouring, by methods which may as yet be crude, to demonstrate the possibility of communication with the spirit world.*

It is not easy for us to put ourselves in the place of these first followers of Jesus. Suddenly a veil had been torn from their eyes. Suddenly the horizon seemed to widen out unlimitedly. Life is no more "cabin'd, cribb'd and confin'd." This world merges into another world. This life opens out into a limitless life. There is no more a "here" and a "there." The tide of the eternal sea laps upon these very shores we tread.

* I quite realise that there is spiritualism *and* spiritualism. am commending only the former of these.

Some may like, in this connection, to meditate on that strange story which is known as the Transfiguration. But I must pass it by and ask your thought rather to a certain very illuminating saying of Jesus. I have alluded before to the ridiculous question some people once put to him concerning a woman who had had seven brothers as successive husbands. When he had dealt with that conundrum Jesus went on to give a " proof " of the risen life. " Moses " had said that God is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. " Now," said Jesus, " he is not the God of the dead but of the living." He may be Creator and Sustainer to stones and trees. He is God only to a living personality. Death may perhaps change your relation to material things, but it cannot cut you off from God. Or to put it in another way, human beings have a certain value in the mind of God. Man is God's supreme creative effort. It is unthinkable that God should make millions upon millions of him, only to destroy every specimen He has ever created. That would indeed be to conceive of God as the Eternal Pessimist. Such a conception would have been intolerable to Jesus. And the more awake you are, as he was, to the infinite variety of human life, to its aspirations and ideals, to its ever-widening achievement, to its endless adaptability, to all that there is in it of the beautiful, the good, the true, the less and less will it be possible for you to imagine its God as for ever

plunging it back into the darkness whence it came.

He is the God of the living ; and one account adds " for all live unto him." God is not the caretaker of a cemetery, He is the Father of a family. He has given His children life, and His love for them is not a pretence and a make-believe. It does indeed all depend on what you think about God. If you picture him as a petty despot then truly there is no knowing what He might do. But the more wonderful is your conception of Him, the less will you care to talk of limitations to His power, purpose and love. You will be inclined to speak as Jesus once did. It was in a different connection indeed, but we shall probably not be wrong in thinking that it would express his mind on a great number of problematical matters. He had said that it was extraordinarily difficult for a rich man to get into the Kingdom. His friends were astonished—" then whoever could be saved ? " they said. He replied " with man it is impossible, but not with God ; for all things are possible with God."

The worst of so many people is that they have so little imagination. And they do not give God the credit for having much more than they possess themselves. We may assuredly in these days learn much from science. For scientific research is daily showing us more and more clearly that Alice is in Wonderland, and that she really has never been anywhere else !

Jesus, the teller of stories, and the lover of children, would revel in the knowledge of to-day. He said of these children : " their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven." The world is a wonderful place ; and it is in touch with a world even more wonderful. Science tells the wonders of the material universe, and as it probes deeper it seems to discern things that can be described as material only by a stretch of language. Imaginative religion peoples the world invisible so that it becomes as real as that which reveals itself to our eyes.

Indeed, what do our senses know of the true reality ? " Things are not what they seem." I sit upon a chair—I am supported by invisible electrons. I dream * and behold I am standing up ready to speak. People come in and quietly go to their places before me. I do not recognise any of them. But the building seems as familiar to them as it is to me. And each goes to a seat which appears to be his customary one. It comes to my dream that these are the spirits of those departed long since who formerly worshipped in this house of God. Is my chair a fact, and this other thing but a fiction ? I do not dogmatise. I feel only as Peter Pan, that I would much rather not grow up, if by doing so I shall become an agnostic.

Jesus is reported to have said " Rejoice, because your names are enrolled in Heaven."

* This relates an actual experience.

He told stories of the lost coin, of the lost sheep, and concluded each with the refrain " there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." For him this life was not ring-fenced with a high prison wall, so that none may look out and none from beyond may see in. The visible and invisible are intimately inter-related, and form one whole, as all are the expression of the one eternal mind.

And if Jesus thought so then—what of him now ? I have tried in this little book to present him as he was, and then to bring the man that was into the circumstances and amidst the problems of to-day. But in the present chapter we have thought of him as one who " shuffled off this mortal coil " and entered the spirit world. And we have thought of that spirit world as being, so to speak, of one piece with this present world in which we live. There he is, with all those who have gone before. It is nearly 2,000 years since he was upon earth. This visible world has altered vastly, has progressed amazingly since then. And has (we may ask) the invisible remained stationary, unaltered ? Have the people there never progressed at all ? With material limitations removed, have they not gone forward at all ? Will the prisoner who has had his fetters knocked off for ever remain in his cell ?

I allow myself to conjecture that progress in the life beyond our seeing is far more rapid than it is here ; unhindered, unconstrained,

with a movement onwards that is not for ever harassed by failure. Perhaps that is why the people there are so difficult to communicate with. *We* are but children in the nursery of life. "I am a child, I speak as a child, I feel as a child, I think as a child." But *they* "have put away childish things." The time will come, however, when we shall be promoted to their company. We shall be welcomed (to use the words of Jesus) "to the eternal tabernacles." "Tabernacles" or "tents"—and these imperishable. We may not be housed all together.* Each will go to his own tent, where he will find those whom he knows and loves, and those whom he has always wanted to know, the people for whom he has a natural kinship, those who will always understand.

The tent is indestructible, but it is not immovable. You and I and those who are of one mind with us will rejoice in our opportunities of going forward, when we will,

"to fresh fields and pastures new."

* Cp. the fourth Gospel, saying, "In my Father's house are many mansions."

EPILOGUE

Thus have I written of Jesus of Nazareth. There can be no doubt that he made an enormous impression on his contemporaries. He was fresh, original, creative in his ideas. He was blameless in his personal life : no one had the temerity to attack his moral character. And, withal, he was bold, unflinching ; he cared not what any man should say of him. His dominating purpose was what we should call religious. The true life of him was a life hid with God. His ideas were, he deemed, those of God himself. He spoke not his own will, but the Divine will ; and thus he spoke (as the people felt) with authority.

His vitality and personal ascendancy are shown equally well by the enthusiasm which surrounded him in the early days of his work as by the deadly hatred which submerged him in the end. He was one whom you would follow or he was one whom you would fight, but he was (emphatically) not one whom you would forget. You adored him or you detested him. You either felt that he supplied your deepest needs, or you felt that he trampled on your dearest prejudices. In a word, you confessed

him as a Son of God or you called him a servant of Beelzebub.

The story that we have of him is brief and fragmentary. At first, indeed, the impressions of his immediate followers must have been crowded and almost overwhelming. But when they came to preach him it must very soon have happened that the things concerning him deemed most essential will have taken a foremost place, with the result that before long many an incident and much of the teaching will soon have dropped out of sight. Our extant written records are not a transcript of shorthand notes made during his lifetime. They are (for the most part at any rate), the work of those who were not themselves eye-witnesses, but who endeavoured as faithfully as possible to put together all, whether from written or oral sources, that could be gathered some thirty years or more after his death. In that interval much had been lost beyond hope of recovery. And we in these days may well deplore the fact. It might well be argued that *our* judgment of what was essential would differ in many respects from that of the men of seventeen centuries ago. And yet I do not think that the resultant portrait would have been very different. The Gospel writers may not be consummate artists—though if anyone shall argue otherwise I will not say him nay. But what they give us is what had been preserved by the common tradition; what, in other words, had been felt by the tiring

growing Christian community to be the things that really mattered. The Jesus we find there is the Jesus that was alive to them.

And this Jesus, I have tried to show, may be alive to us. But at once the criticism arises that I have done something very much less than give the Jesus of the whole fourfold Gospel. The impression that we gather (it may be said), from the full Gospel account is of someone who was not just a man amongst men, a human individual essentially the same as, however eminent among, the crowd of other human individuals. Our impression is of one who cannot be described in terms of mere humanity.

This is all most true. But there are these two things that we have to remember. First, that in our Gospel stories we have various stages or strata of recollection. In the fourth Gospel, for example, you see a picture which is unquestionably coloured by later reflection. And second, that to his immediate contemporaries, and during the actual days of his ministry, Jesus appeared as a human being, pure and simple, a real man. His intimate friends may indeed have had a growing sense that this master of theirs was not quite as other men. And yet to the end of his earthly life they behaved towards him (with whatever increments of awe and reverence) as they did towards each other. He was one with whom you ate and drank, one who needed your sword if he were

in danger, one whom it was safer to leave when his enemies had trapped him.

In the foregoing pages I have endeavoured to get into touch with this man as he impressed himself upon those who first saw and heard him. I can hope for no more than that the effort will prove interesting. For I would venture upon this paradox—that the success of any such endeavour is precisely proportionate to its failure. For the Jesus who has made Christianity is not the Jesus of those three years' ministry alone. And the earliest impressions are not necessarily the truest ones.

I ask your attention to the following considerations. You cannot get at the full meaning of a man if you isolate him. The richness of a human life can be gauged only if you see it in relation to, affecting and affected by, other human lives. Personality permeates, and in doing so, and only in so doing, it grows, finds character and becomes itself. This is a fact of everyday experience, and will hardly be disputed. But I would go beyond that. A man, I would say, is related not only to his contemporaries ; he may not find full expression until long years after. When he dies he goes on living.

I am not speaking here of that immortal life for which men hope beyond the grave. But I suggest that there is a very real sense in which a man whose mortal remains are laid in the earth may still live here—live and grow. This is not true, be it admitted, of most men. For a

few short years the memory of them lingers amongst those who knew and loved them. And then it fades away and the world knows them no more. Of the majority of human beings who have played their part on this mortal stage not even the names survive.

But again, there are names which are household words. There have been in the world's history men who have stood out among their fellows, and who are in a very real sense alive and with us still. Now the point I would make is this—that such men have very seldom, if ever, been entirely understood by their own generation. They have had qualities and a genius which have needed time and subsequent reflection to interpret. The men who can be easily understood are but short-lived. But these others are immortal. And the life they live amongst men is a growing life. The Shakespeare of to-day is a bigger man than the playright of the days of Elizabeth. We react more truly to him than did his contemporaries. He has required these intervening years and us of these latter days in order that he may grow to his full stature. We know him better than did the people of 300 years ago—better even than he knew himself. And it may be that *we* have not yet exhausted the full significance of him.

With this thought in mind, return once more to Jesus. In the foregoing pages I have tried to put before you the Jesus as at first he seemed. But very soon those who thought about him

and wrote about him felt that the measure of the stature of his fulness was not to be stated in terms which were applicable to ordinary men. They were led to use language about his person and his work which put both into the realm of things super-human, super-natural, divine. Whether they were right, or in what measure they were right, I am not here concerned to enquire. My only point is this—that a development in the portraiture was inevitable and was necessary. Such an one would not be likely to come to his own immediately. He would live and would grow amongst his posterity. And the later conceptions of him might well be truer to fact than the earlier. They will indeed have to be most carefully tested. But there is no *a priori* reason why they should not be right.

But it is (I take it) useful and helpful to recall, so far as we are able, the first impressions. There we come into contact with our basal facts. And no later inferences can be allowed to contradict those facts. "Back to Christ" is a good call. But we must be sure we know what we mean. If we mean that we can only be true to him if we refuse any testimony except what, after vigorous criticism, we may recover of the earliest record, the most primitive impression, then I think we are doing what neither analogy nor experience justify. Something of that sort has been attempted in these pages. But I hope the result is unsatisfactory. I could wish the reader to finish with such questions as these in his mind.

Can I find in this purely human Jesus a sufficient cause for the existence of Christianity ?

What am I to make of the fact that he was so soon deified by his followers ?

If their instinct was in the main right, in what terms may we in these days, in our different environment of thought, so define and describe him that he may be no less vital to us than he was to our forefathers ?

INDEX

Acts i. 3, 79 n.
Adultery, 57 ff.
Almsgiving, 42 f.
Analogies, 116 ff.
Anger, Righteous, 31 f.
Anointing at Bethany, 145 f.
Anxiety, Freedom from, 45 f.
Apocalyptic, 43 ff, 62 f, 66 f, 95 f, 100 f, 146 ff.
Architecture, 113 f.

Baptism, 77 ff.
Baptism of Jesus, 9, 78 f.
Bible, 92 ff.
Blake quoted, 124, 143
Blind Man, Healing of, 89

Children, 54 f, 75, 97, 154
Christianity, 22, 35 f, 65, 82, 96, 111 f, 127 ff.
Church, The, 66 ff.
" Clean " and " Unclean," 83
Cleansing of Temple, 32, 33
Competition, 39
" Corban," 42, 94 f.

Death, 144 ff.
Demons, 101 f, 104 f.
Dives and Lazarus, Parable of, 40
Divorce, 56 ff.
Drag-net, Parable of, 77

Economics, 50
Epileptic Boy, 89
Equality and Fraternity, 48
Eternal Life, 152 ff.
Ethiopia, Queen of, 97
Eucharist. *See* Last Supper.

Feeding of 5000, 89 f.
" Flock " and " Fold," 77
Fool, Parable of the Rich, 41, 115 f.
Force, Use of, 33 ff.
Foreigners, Jesus and, 24 ff.
Free Will, 105 f.
Friend at Midnight, Parable of, 115

Gadarene Demoniac, 129
Genesis ii., 55 ff, 64, 95
Gentiles. *See* Foreigners.
Gethsemane, 136, 145
God, Providence of, 46 f, 86 f, 141 f.
Golden Rule, The, 38 ff, 49 f.
Good Samaritan, Parable of the, 42
Gospels as History, The, 158 ff.

Healing " Miracles," 88, 108
Hidden Treasure, Analogy of, 76
Holy Spirit, The, 73, 78, 129 f.
Home Life, 52 ff.
Honesty, 49
Humility, 134 f.

Impediment, Man with, 89
Importunate Widow, Parable of, 115
Instincts, 106, 110
Interimsethik, 43 ff.
International Differences, 33

Jairus' Daughter, 63, 89
John, the Baptist, 1 ff, 7 ff, 94
Jonah, 97

Joseph, Husband of Mary, 53 f.
Joseph of Arimathæa, 41 f.
Judas, 148
Judgment, The Last, 42 f.

KINGDOM of GOD, The, 1, 18, 45

LAST Supper, The, 122 ff, 130 f.
Law, The, 70
Literature, 113 ff.
Lord's Prayer, The, 102, 105, 137
Lost Coin, Parable of the, 75, 115, 155
Lost Sheep, Parable of the, 75, 115, 155

MARRIAGE, 55 ff.
Martha and Mary, 63, 129
Messiah, The, 1 f, 5 ff, 10 f, 17
Milton quoted, 156
Miracles, 87 ff.
Missions, 67
Money-making, 39 ff.
Music, 113, 114
Mustard Seed, Analogy of, 76

NAIN, Widow of, 63
Nature, 46 f, 83 ff.
Neighbour, Love of, 23, 27 f.
Noah, 99

PARABLES, 115
Pearl of Great Price, Analogy of, 76
Penitent Thief, 105
Pensions and Doles, 38, 49 f.
Person of Christ. *See* the Epilogue.
Peter, 145
Pharisee and Publican, Parable of, 76, 134 f.
Poetry of Jesus, 119 ff.
Pounds, Parable of, 47 f, 148
Poverty, 40 ff.
Prayer, 137 ff.
Prayer, Intercessory, 139 f.
Prodigal Son, Parable of, 75 f, 103, 104, 115, 121
Psalm civ., 125
Psalm cx., 95

RELIGION, 74 f, 111, 127
Renunciation, 41, 61 f.
Repentance, 75 ff, 105 ff.
Resurrection of Jesus, 149 ff.
Resurrection, Question about, 58 f, 93
Riches, 40 ff, 103

SABBATH, The, 94, 127 ff.
Sacerdotalism, 72 ff.
Sacrificial System, 70 ff.
Samaritans, 27 f, 34
Science, 81 ff, 153
Scribes and Pharisees, 74
Sculpture, 113
Seed Growing Secretly, Parable of, 84
Self-denial, 133 f.
Service, 49
Sex Problems, 55 ff.
Shakespeare quoted, 59, 151
" Sheep and Goats," 30
Shelley quoted, 64 f.
Slavery, 45 n.
Slums, 49
Sodom, 99
Solitude, Desire for, 135 ff.
Son of GOD, 9, 13, 135
Son of Man, 6
Sower, Parable of the, 40, 69, 77, 86, 101, 102, 129
Spiritualism, 151, 155
Steward, Parable of Wicked, 47
Suffering, Problem of, 107 ff.
Suffering Servant, The, 12
Supper, Parable(s) of the Great, 29 f.
Synagogues, 68 n, 73 f.

TALENTS, Parable of the, 47 f.
Tares, Parable of the, 77, 86, 123
Tempest, Stilling of the, 130

Temple, The, 71 f, 74, 114
Temptation, 101 ff.
Temptation of Jesus, 4 ff, 94
Ten Virgins, Parable of the, 147
Tower of Siloam, 85
Tribute Money, 94
Trust in God, 12 f, 141 f.

Unemployment, 49
Unprofitable Servant, Parable of the, 32

Vinedressers, Parable of the Wicked, 29, 47, 68 f, 93
Vineyard, Parable of Labourers in, 37 f.
Visio Dei, 132 f.

War, 22 ff.
Widow's Mite, 71, 130
Withering of Fig-tree, 68
Woman who was a Sinner, 60 f, 121
Women, 60 ff.
Wordsworth quoted, 130

Zacchæus, 41, 76, 105

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